

PLAY



The UK's bestselling independent gaming magazine

ISSUE NO **206**
THE FINAL CHAPTER

preview

ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Bethesda tells us why you'll be blown away

review

DUNGEON SIEGE III

World's first verdict

revealed!
MODERN WARFARE 3
What Activision didn't want you to know

WORLD EXCLUSIVE ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS

Unrestricted access to the final chapter

preview

SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

Volition talks up the insanity for part three

news

THE FUTURE OF PSN

From Uncharted multiplayer to PSN lessons, we reveal all

feature

PSP2: HANDS-ON

The full verdict on every major launch title inside

also inside

- ◆ Max Payne 3
- ◆ MGS: Rising ◆ Skyrim
- ◆ Prey 2 ◆ Mass Effect 3
- ◆ Tomb Raider ◆ Driver: SF

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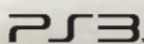




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Syfy Games



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We're not sure what genre this is. Or where it's set. Fingers crossed the preview will fill us in!

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Take *Prey*, add PlayStation 3, subtract hero and you have a sequel! Sort of.



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- No More Heroes

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Wallpapers, software and movies to watch on your PS3 and PSP!

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PS3 wallpapers and themes

Play Podcast

Catch up on what the Play team has been rambling about

PC Software

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PlayStation 3 PSN PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

FEATURES

34 ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS

Hookblades and bombs galore...

The final chapter



This month, I have typed the words 'final chapter' more times than I can count. It's probably more than ten, it's definitely more

than my usual stock phrases when I type, such as 'no' and 'Chris, make me a coffee, cheers'.

But if Ubisoft is going to go on record declaring this to be Ezio's final chapter in its *Assassin's Creed* series, we're going to bloody well run with it. That sense of finality means it will be going all out and **Play** is the first to bring you details of the deadly hookblade, the changed multiplayer, the new city, the flippin'-well-everything-you-need-to-know.

Yet while Ezio's chapter is drawing to a close, a new one is just beginning as Sony invited us to try out PSP2. 'Okay', we said, trying to maintain a sense of cool and not giggle like girls fawning over a crush. We held it together long enough to try out all the major games, the sexy touch screen and we didn't even drop it. Major success all round.

Finally, we talk to the teams behind blockbuster games on the horizon, such as *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *Saints Row: The Third*, while also securing the exclusive review of *Dungeon Siege III*, sure to be one of the sleeper hits of the summer.

Soak up all the gaming news, relax and know you have the best magazine delivering you the best games on the best console. Chris, make me a coffee? Enjoy the issue.

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Lots of dragons, no dogma

Get in touch!

Let us entertain you during our downtime at work



Facebook

You can find us avoiding work at [facebook.com/PlayMagUK](https://www.facebook.com/PlayMagUK). shhhh



YouTube

Lots of trailers and funny stuff I've made at [youtube.com/PlayMagUK](https://www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK)



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Home of our blogs and opinions, check in at playmag.co.uk



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Rking

Editor

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As the hero Link, your destiny will lead you through time itself to thwart Ganondorf, the evil King of Thieves. Experience Link's greatest adventure remastered in glorious 3D.



AIM BY MOVING THE NINTENDO 3DS SYSTEM!



RE:PLAY

This month we're worrying about bad Uncharted games, slagging off the PSP and hating the human race. Your typical Play letters page then

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Uncharted The Movie: The Game

Last month I was reading the letter about movie tie-in games. Then I thought if they do make an *Uncharted* film they would probably make a game. As games of films are not usually that great I thought would this be the first BAD *Uncharted* game, or do you think they may get Naughty Dog in on it to focus on the game. And one final point – Do you think that *COD* is dragging on a bit now, because some of my friends think that it should end soon? Thanks for more great issues.

Dan Underwood

remember any others? And *COD* will continue because it takes in the cash but yes, it desperately needs reinvention, or innovation, or inspiration, or something.

What did you say?

I'm writing to ask if you guys know why the hell it's taken all these years for Sony to finally make a PSP that's got two analogue sticks. Fair enough with the first PSP since they were just starting off with the whole handheld thing, but surely they could have listened to the fans and then produced one that had all the improvements that people were asking for? Like the ability to play FPS games properly and not in a noob sort of way using the shape buttons to move backwards, forwards and side to side and a fully functioning $\oplus$ button that didn't take an extra hard button press for it to work. But instead they decided to bring out slightly smaller versions with barely any important improvements, and then decided to create the PSPgo which was just

plain annoying. Yeah sure, it had some good tech but if you look at where the $\triangle$ and $\square$ buttons are positioned, that area would have been perfect for a second analogue stick. It's as if Sony were toying with us on the design of that one. They might as well have had an empty hole there to give the impression that it was stolen during the shipping process. As soon as I saw the confirmed PSP design to be released the first thing I said was about bloody time they put another analogue stick on it, it's not like we are in the Stone Age here.

Kev Schmit

I can't remember what we said, definitely wasn't anything about the analogue stick though. I think Ian said how amazing it looked and somehow managed to sound enthused and cynical at the same time. Jon said he was surprised by how positive the office was towards it. Chris probably said something about tiny skulls while crawling under his desk.

Our favourite

I'm writing to complain about the human race for I am in a very pessimistic mood today. First thing I'm going to complain about are gaming communities. On the PlayStation 3 most people are fine, but any teamwork is out the window because it appears that most people are either too poor from buying the PS3 to afford a headset or have a severe case of shyness and wish to not talk even though they bought the Sony headset! People on the PlayStation 3 don't listen to team-mates or respond and it appears that most of the PlayStation community is deaf and/or blind,



The stuff we want to hear about!



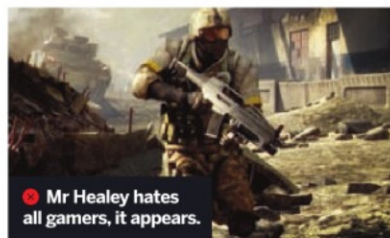
- 1 The PSN getting hacked. Who do you blame?
- 2 What do you think of this year's E3 announcements?
- 3 L.A. Noire – was all the hype justified?





Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Codemasters. For each letter we included this month the sender wins a copy of DiRT 3, which is available now for PS3 (£49.99).

because there are people who will join your team on games like *Bad Company 2* and just look at you for a while then shoot you a few times and try to walk away as if it was an accident. I think the point I'm trying to make is that people are idiots. In games like *MAG* and *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*, which me and many others would regard the multiplayer as being team based, but stupid people wanting to play in teams buy the game expecting it to just be a good game, but the vast quantity of like-minded idiots make up most of the community, and they expect someone else to unite them, someone



else to make them talk and someone else to make them play as a team, and because almost all the people on the game are idiots that can't be bothered to put the effort in the community then expects a lack of leadership and want to play *Call Of Duty* style. Then when someone who wants to play the game properly comes and tries to unite the team, they are shunned because of the new community's accepted norm, thus continuing the cycle of lazy, half-assed

Call Of Duty players who plan to ruin every other FPS in existence.

Most Xbox 360 gamers are just douches, they are all egotistical narcissistic idiots who believe they are always right and that they are the best – if someone kills them they must be hacking, if you die, it must be the lag, if someone's better than you it must be because of glitches. Xbox 360 players just can't accept the fact that there will always be someone better.

All of these factors and more lead me to believe that every other Xbox 360 gamer is a five year old that has been breast-fed pure idiocy and the other half of the Xbox 360 community are being so influenced by these idiots because they lack the ability to comprehend their own abilities, that they become like them. Spreading the bread called community with a nice thick layer of something brown and sticky, and I am not talking about Marmite.

Mr Healey, hater of humanity

This one came straight from our forums. We've been accused of being biased towards Mr Healey by fellow forumite Scrum but Mr Healey reports all the spam (although he's been slacking lately), posts every day and has a funny avatar. And look how long this letter is! It's filled most of these two page. We hardly had to do anything here. Yes Mr Healey!

From 360 to PS3

For many dark years, I was a 360 fanboy. Yes, I know, it was a bleak time... I fought long and hard with friends, who spat on Microsoft's big gun but I looked past Xbox's flaws, like a true fanboy!

As the years went on, Xbox let me down. Countless titles went multiplatform, while on PS3, the likes of *Killzone* and *Heavy Rain* just kept coming. The final nail came with the release of *Move* and *Kinect*.

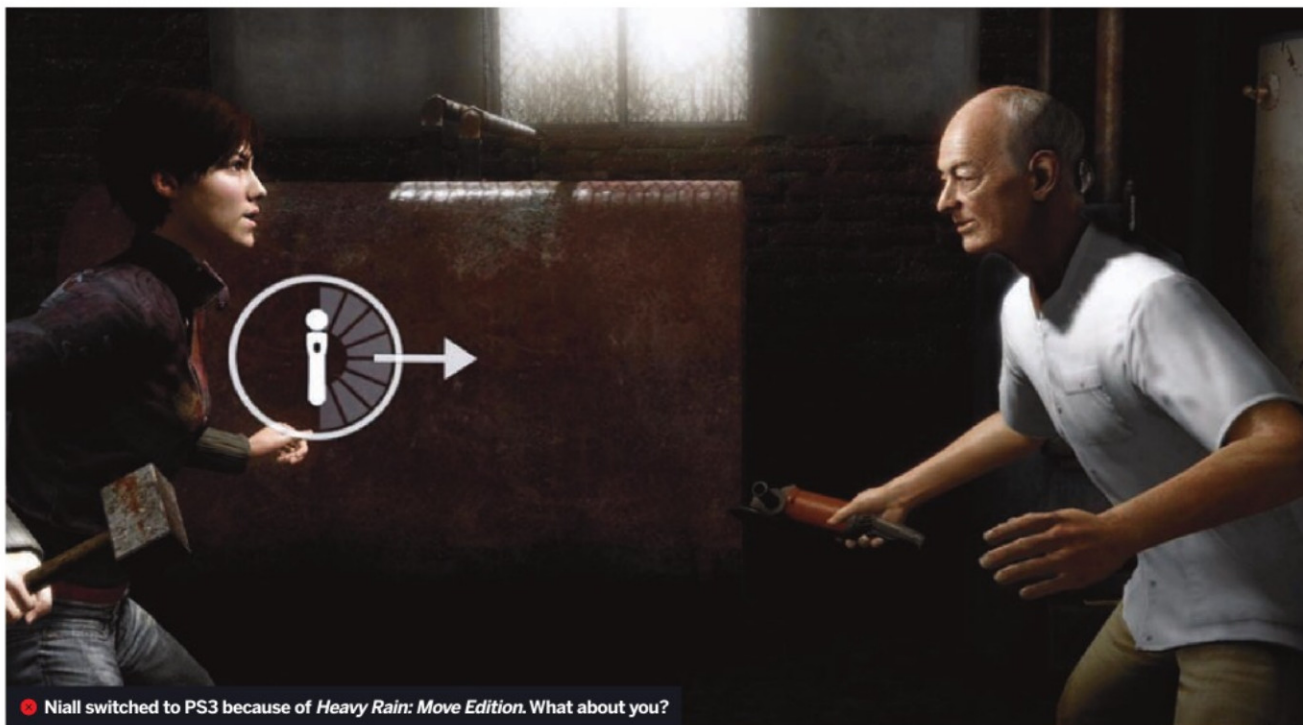
Kinect had trailers of games that were just a ploy by Microsoft to get the hardcore interested. While on *Move*, *Resi*, *Heavy Rain*, *Killzone*, *Dead Space*, there were countless *Move* titles that could attract gamers like myself!

All that was needed to finish the puzzle was a PlayStation mag of sorts! I always bought a certain Xbox mag and loved it, so I needed to find one that could replace its coverage of the xbox with PS3 news. Lo and behold, I saw the cover of issue 203, and now I'm hooked!

I bought myself a PS3, I love it, and I have a super cool mag to read before I go to sleep at night (not out of boredom, obviously, but rather to dream of future PlayStation gaming). Keep up the good work guys!

Niall, Ireland

'Spat on Microsoft's big gun'? Sounds rude. Is that legal in Ireland? Still, we genuinely love your enthusiasm, Niall. Top man.



PLAY

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INSTALL

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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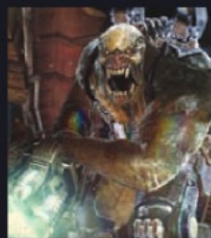
20 Reload

26 And finally...



"These two devices look to have what it takes to make a big impact" p.17





Resistance 3 demo bundled with film

A single-player demo for *Resistance 3* will be packaged with the Blu-ray release of *Battle: Los Angeles*, which is released 14 June. You may remember that the existence of *Resistance 3* was first leaked by a billboard on the set of *Battle: Los Angeles* a couple of years back.



Ubisoft creates movie studio

After the success of its *Assassin's Creed* short films Ubisoft has announced the creation of Ubisoft Motion Pictures. Ubisoft also enjoyed some success due to the reception of the *Prince Of Persia* film. Such projects may well be handled by Ubisoft internally going forward.



Pulp fiction for L.A. Noire

Been enjoying your playthrough of *L.A. Noire* this last month? Well, now you can extend your experience with a series of *L.A. Noire* spin-off novels written by noir crime thriller veterans. *L.A. Noire: The Collected Stories* was released as a digital eBook on 6 June.

SPOILER WARNING!

twitterwatch

@TheKevinButler
"KB Tax Tip - You don't have to pay federal taxes if you're a registered resident of PlayStation Nation. It's true. Thanks IRS!"
@PlayMag_UK says: We're fairly sure this isn't true. Maybe Kevin Butler isn't Sony VP of tax returns after all.



● *Modern Warfare 2's* Spec Ops mode will be returning.



● Just as we saw pictured here in *MW2*, *MW3* will head underground as well.

Modern Warfare 3: 10 things you MUST know

The first details of this year's biggest game revealed

1 There's a new team in town

Price and MacTavish are key players in the events of *Modern Warfare 3*, but all signs point towards a new guard from Delta Force named Frost and Sandman taking over the series going forward. Task Force 141's mission is coming to a close.

2 We're going underground

The London-based mission for *Modern Warfare 3* will begin at Thames dockyards and lead to a running gun battle underneath the streets of the capital using the London Underground network. You'll also be hunting for Makarov's number two under Paris.

3 Time to bomb Paris

The AC-130 is returning to *Modern Warfare 3's* single-player game and you will be using it to bomb Paris of all places. This is all part of your efforts to locate Makarov by capturing his right-hand man. You will also find yourself fighting in helicopters in the skies over New York.

4 Europe is invaded

Thought the invasion of the US mainland was crazy? Well then, you may struggle to comprehend a co-ordinated attack on several major European cities as Russia leads a ground invasion of the continent.

5 What did Australia do wrong?

The campaign will be taking you to more locations than ever before over 15 missions with destinations including Sierra Leone,

Somalia, India, Russia, Czech Republic, Germany and the United Arab Emirates.

6 20 online maps

Early indications suggest there will be as many as 20 maps for playing online, some of which appear to be based on single-player locations. There were 16 maps available on the disc for *Modern Warfare 2*.

7 Fighting up high and down low

While many of the maps for online play have cryptic names, Alps, Brooklyn, Paris, Mogadishu and Underground are fairly unambiguous. Clearly multiplayer will take you to the peaks of mountains to under the streets of London.

8 Special mention

Spec Ops naturally makes a return with *Modern Warfare 3*, being Infinity Ward's answer to Zombies. 12 missions have been suggested, split between a Survival mode where you face waves of enemies and a Mission Mode, more like the last Spec Ops.

9 Custom built

Some of the customisation options we've seen are insanely small and varied. There's different head, eye, face gear and body wear, but will it affect how you play? That we don't know yet. Besides making you look cooler.

10 08.11.11

There's only one date you need to remember if you're a *Call Of Duty* fan now. 8 November 2011 is the date we understand *Modern Warfare 3* will be launching. That's just after *Uncharted 3* and before *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*.

INSTALL

YOUR SHOUT TOMB RAIDER

1. **@BAUERRAT** New *Tomb Raider* mmm... isn't she younger now? 16 or something? It just feels wrong to play it naked now.
2. **@PAUL_BOWLER** So *Tomb Raider* is getting a reboot, at least it'll be a proper game this time. Hmmm, I wonder... Lara Vs Nate? FIGHT!
3. **@THETRIBE BRAND** New *Tomb Raider* looks a welcome change in direction for the ageing series, looks fresh and very different. Looks a winner!
4. **@AMONGNINJASSITE** The new *Tomb Raider* is looking good in the same way something "you know you shouldn't like but probably will" does. Like jam with cheese!
5. **@CONORRRRRRRRR** I think that so far it looks really good, but it could either be very, very bad or very, very good. Not sure either way.
6. **@ALILO954** Not planning to see it or buy it, it's *Tomb Raider*! Not *Uncharted*.
7. **@SCOTTISHHUSKY** After playing *Tomb Raider Trilogy*, I'm looking forward to it. It's no *Uncharted* but I still have love left for Lara.

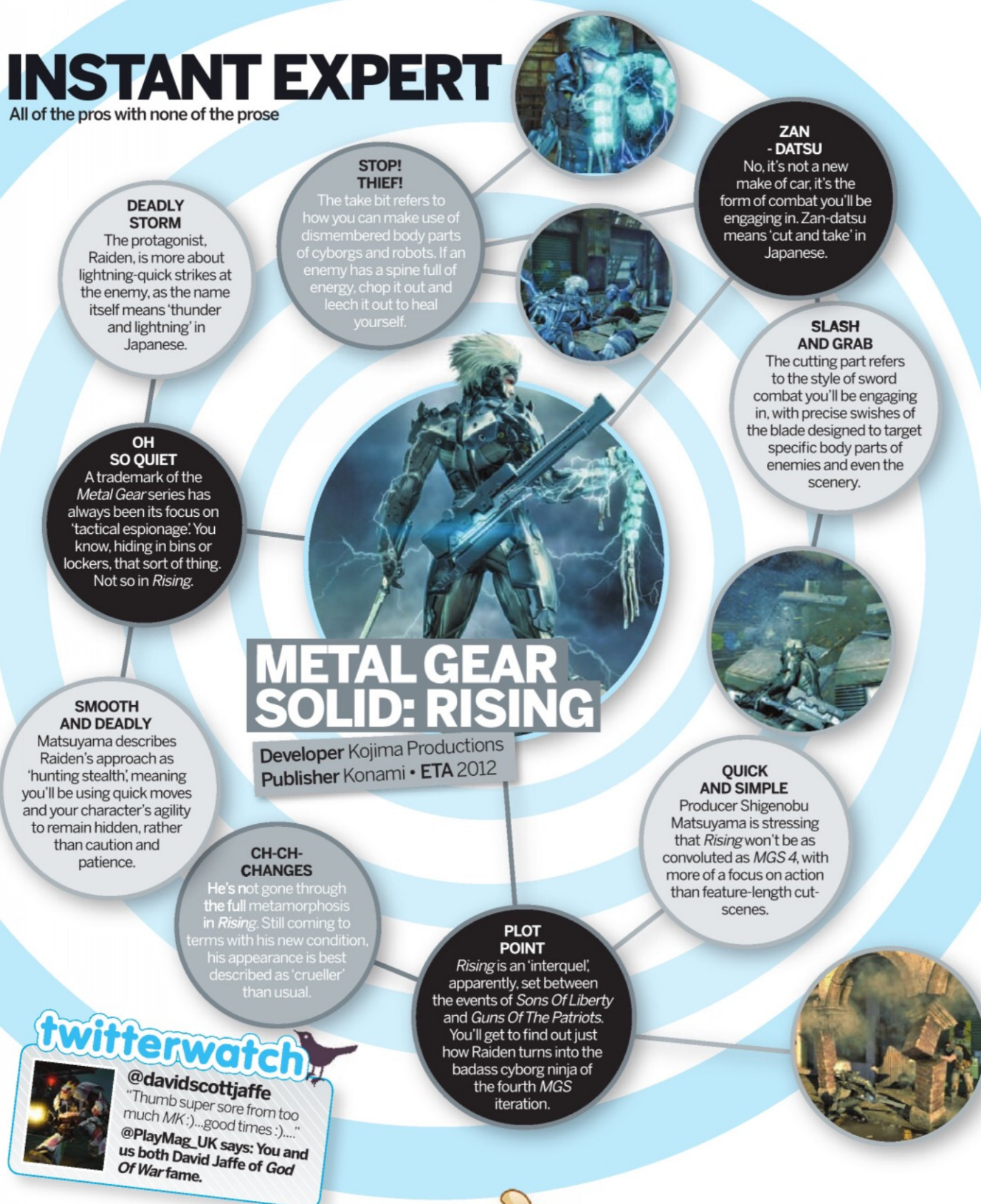
twitterwatch

What about other upcoming games? Excited about *Deus Ex*? Barmy about *Batman*? Join in the conversation on Twitter over at **@PlayMag_UK** and you could star on this page next



INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose



WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

It's getting boring wanting so much



1 Endless compensation

Yes, the PSN downtime was forever ago and is long forgotten – but we have long memories. We refuse to accept whatever it is that Sony tried to compensate us with as being adequate, even if it was gold doubloons. We want more, more, MORE! We are in no way greedy, over-privileged little punks. No siree.

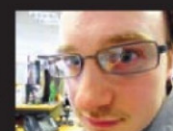
2 PSPgo's ashes to be scattered

Alas, poor PSPgo, we barely knew thee. Taken from us in the prime of your... well, you did have some good features... like the... hmmm. Look, we won't bore you with the details, let's just say as a member of the Sony family – even if it was the black sheep – the handheld deserves a respectful send-off. You can make the arrangements, Sony.



3 A Jon Gordon dynamic theme

Somebody get on this, right now.



4 Cross game chat

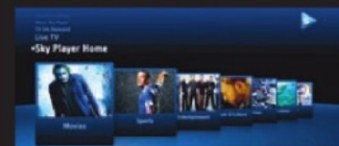
Seriously, though – why haven't we got this yet?

5 Reddit on the XMB

Really, though, why isn't this on the top of everybody's to-do list forever? Granted, we're being hypocritical in that it's number five here, but we have to mix things up for the sake of you, our readers. Reddit. XMB. Widget. Brilliant.



WWWT5 news:



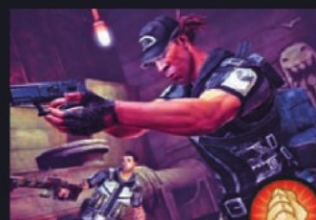
While we are still hopeful Sky Player will make its way to PlayStation 3 at some point, we're less likely to care right now. Why? Well isn't it obvious? The football season is over. We'll start caring again come August.

DOS & DON'TS

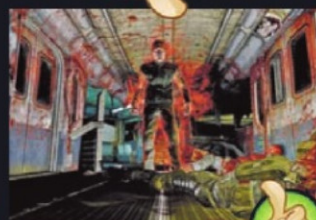
Important lessons from Play this month



DO: Call yourself Omelette when playing *DiRT 3* just for a laugh. It would make us very happy to think that you did.



DON'T: Play only as a Soldier in *Brink*. You should really give the other classes a try to see just how valuable they can be.



DO: Play *F.E.A.R. 3* with the lights out, if only for old time's sake. It's not really as scary as the old ones, but it's not all bad.



DON'T: Spend too much time attempting to work out the plot threads of *Assassin's Creed* like we did. You'll get a headache.

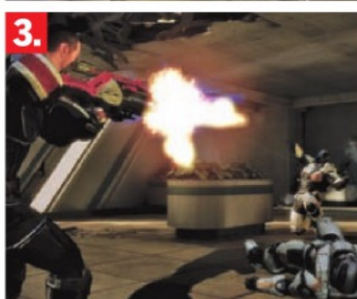
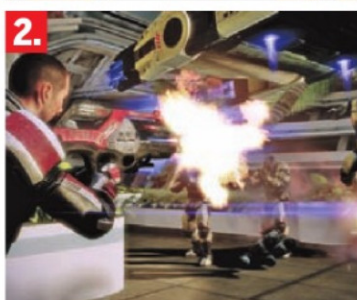
Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 77

INSTALL

Mass Effect 3 One Screen, Five Angles

A lesson in screen economics from BioWare

We don't know how developers take screenshots. We've got a fairly humble screenshot machine in the office when reviewing games but when we ask PRs for new screens, they say no because they take 'eight hours to render' or something. It's probably not true. But then we see BioWare taking the same screenshot five times and we think well, you know. Maybe it is!



What next for PSN?

Has the PSN hack damaged PS3's future? We ask an expert

Play: Will publishers be wary of Sony after the PSN hack?

Edward Woo, research analyst, Wedbush Securities: I think everybody will be more wary of Sony after this incident,

including publishers (who are losing sales opportunities, and playability with their games) and consumers (who are losing opportunities to play their games, the potential loss of their private information/identity theft). Publishers are clearly losing sales opportunities with PSN down.

Can PSN recover the confidence of publishers and gamers?

If they get the consumers back, they will

get back the confidence of the publishers. If Activision sells tons of *COD* map packs, I think all will be forgiven. I think this is a likely scenario, as again most gamers are already invested in their gaming consoles so it would take a lot to get them to completely abandon their system. Plus, the move to online gaming is irreversible regardless of the potential risks.

Do you feel Sony handled events well or could it have done more?

It seems that these days, everybody's IT data is being compromised somewhere somehow. Unfortunately, nobody has been able to completely stop hackers from

stealing data, so I don't expect Sony or anybody else to be completely bulletproof. I think Sony is doing as good of a job as anybody else in their position could do.

What do you feel the longer-term impact of the PSN hack is likely to be. Does this damage the reputation of digital distribution as a whole?

I don't think this damages the future of digital distribution, if anything it will strengthen it as more precautions will be made to protect the whole IT infrastructure. I also believe that further legislation will be implemented to deter hackers from doing this type of damage.

Lessons to be learned

Listen up Sony, this is what you should be doing in future

1 Speak with one voice: Who were you following to get up-to-date information? The PlayStation Blog? Perhaps you followed some of the Twitter feeds? There were too many voices and not enough information.

2 Speak to everyone: Blogs and tweets were all well and good, but mass emails to every subscriber would have been a lot better. Cover every base and speak to everyone at once.

3 Don't stop talking: 22-hour gaps between updates just wasn't good enough. 22 minutes would have been better, even if it was only 'we still don't know anything yet'.

4 Be open from the beginning: When PSN first went down we were told it would take a couple of days to fix. If PSN members had known from the start that the process could be 'time intensive' they would have been more forgiving.

5 Head off the serious complaints: Subscribers to PlayStation Plus or *DC Universe Online* should have been addressed quicker. They were actually losing money.



How well do you feel Sony has handled the PSN hack/shutdown?

4% Very well
69% Okay, but not brilliant
15% Not very well
12% Terribly

www.facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK



Do you still trust PSN?

78% Yes
22% No

www.play-mag.co.uk/forum

REASONS WHY...

Silent Hill: Downpour will haunt your soul



A DARK HERO *Silent Hill* has been at its best when its lead character has plenty of demons in the closet and they start to spill out into the real world. *Downpour* sees you following an escaped convict named Murphy Pendleton. Need we say more?



TRIGGER HAPPY The trigger that will send Pendleton to the 'other' *Silent Hill*, which all the previous heroes have had to face is – as the name *Downpour* would suggest – water. The alternate, demonic *Silent Hill* is a completely different world where rules such as physics no longer apply.



GETTING IN YOUR HEAD *Downpour* will be going back to some of the classic psychological scares that made it famous. Don't expect too many monsters or pitched battles, at least not at first. This game is going to creep up on you slowly.

twitterwatch



@IGLevine
"I don't believe Thor is natural born Asgardian. Birth certificate?"
@PlayMag_UK says: Topical geek humour from Irrational Games' Ken Levine.



YOU'LL HAVE OPTIONS How you choose to approach a puzzle or obstacle will also be left for you to decide. Different problems could have multiple solutions based on the items you have to hand or have found previously. That's a lot of things to keep in mind.



YOU'LL HAVE CHOICES The development team at Vatra Games is promising that *Silent Hill* will be littered with small choices that could have big repercussions for you later on. Some of these decisions may even be life or death.

QUESTION

Why is Asura's Wrath so insane?

HOPEFULLY LAST ISSUE you will have had the chance to read our latest impressions of a new game from Capcom called *Asura's Wrath*. It was announced at TGS last year, but we didn't get a good look at it until recently and on closer inspection it is clearly mad. The question is, why?

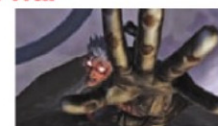
It's a Japan thing

You could put the insanity down to this game simply being very, very Japanese. There's form here after all. Japan has a long history of putting out very strange games. Plumbers jumping on the heads of mushrooms and turtles to save a princess, for instance.



It's God Of War

We've kind of become used to *God Of War* so its particular brand of wacky doesn't strike us as all that odd, but actually it's bonkers. *Asura's Wrath* is essentially the same plot-wise except with original characters instead of all the gods and mythology to soften the blow.



Its developers got bored

Take a look at the list of games developed by CyberConnect2 and it's no surprise they lost their minds. It's wall to wall *Naruto* and *.hack//* games. Much like how *Dead Space* and *Dante's Inferno* developer Visceral made *James Bond* and *Lord Of The Rings* games.



It's social commentary

Perhaps CyberConnect2 and Capcom are trying to tell us something about the world we live in and the fact that resorted to rage and "Wrath" is a spiral into the madness of violence that cannot be escaped or rationalised. Deep stuff.



It's taking the piss

A boss that's as big as Earth and who tries to squish our hero with his finger? Surely this is an attempt to comment on the post-SOTC trend for featuring massive bosses as a substitute for coming up with original ideas.



ANSWER:

Insane is Capcom's comfort zone



Big DLC plans for Battlefield

'More than map packs', promises DICE

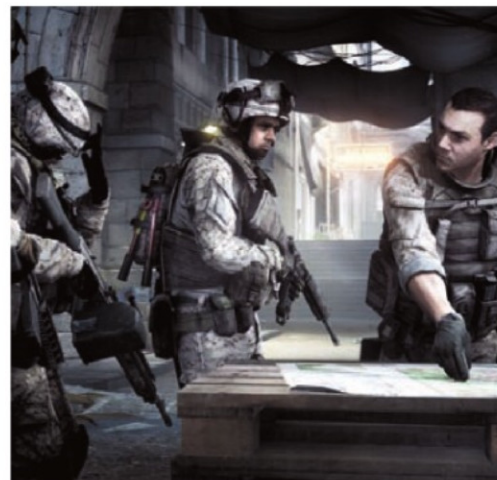
DICE will be looking to follow up the success of its *Vietnam* DLC for *Bad Company 2* with similarly large DLC updates for its upcoming blockbuster shooter. *Battlefield 3* will be launching with the Back To Karkand map pack as a pre-order purchase, but speaking exclusively to **Play**, executive producer Patrick Bach said his team was working on so much more.

"You don't have to do a map pack and sell it for \$15," he insisted. "You can change the whole tone of the game by working with the whole experience rather than just saying, 'here's a new map'. And I think

to the consumer hopefully that gives you more value for your money."

The *Vietnam* pack was hugely successful for *Bad Company 2*, reaching around 20 per cent of players, according to Bach despite going on sale eight months after the game was launched. DICE already has experienced hands trying to build something similar for *Battlefield 3* right now.

"We have a lot of the old *Battlefield 2* developers working in that team to do it right," Bach revealed to us. "I will be very excited to be able to show that later, but I can't do it right now."





LittleBigPlanet 2

Q&A

From player to game designer: Christophe Villedieu tells Play how playing LittleBigPlanet saw him become the sequel's game designer

We understand you ended up working at Media Molecule off the back of what you had been creating on LBP. How did MM approach you?

It happened in quite a funny way. I was an artistic director in an advertising agency in Paris, and was creating levels for the community. I was also reading the MM blog for the showcase levels from MM Picks. I always played all of them, and was reading the comments as well. In

It's pretty hard not to be able to make anything you want in LBP 2

those comments, some guys were doing some presentations of their levels, so I played them, too, but I really thought my levels were better, so I posted on the MM blog saying, "Hello, I've made these two levels, a pinball level and a Maya level, I hope you will like them". The same day I got a mail from Mark Stephenson, an MM level designer, telling me my levels were really creative and fun. I was absolutely amazed. Their next mail asked if I would be interested in working in the videogame industry.

What sort of things had you been working on in LBP at the time? Did MM tell you what it was that had impressed them?

A massive LBP 1 pinball level, with an invisible Sackboy, including pinball mini-games. Sure, now, when I look at my old level, it looks a bit clunky compared to

what we can now do with LBP 2, but at the time, it was a little bit epic.

I remember Kareem, the art director, was complimenting me about my art research for my Maya level, and I think my art and design seduced them.

Did you have much game design or coding experience before LBP?

I had never worked in the industry before LBP, but while making levels for the community in LBP 1, I was working on my personal project (www.monstroplante.com),

a community 'make your monster-plant' game, made in Adobe Flash. I made everything in it – all the design, all the illustrations and all the code.

What was your first day at Media Molecule like?

I was so stressed the night before, but in fact, here, at Media Molecule, everybody is open, talented, and happy to talk with you. I was introduced to everybody, all the aspects of LittleBigPlanet, demoing the 'future LittleBigPlanet 2'. But my first weeks were about concepting DLC adventure motifs for... the Pirates Of The Caribbean pack.

How did it feel having the chance to work on the development of LBP 2?

As a player, it was a dream. The chance to be part of something you love, to improve the nicest aspects of the first

LBP, helping to improve the toolset, inventing new crazy things... pushing the limits. As a creator and a designer, that's a proper challenge, it's really hard to make this nice 'fresh-crafty-crazy-open-sharing-fun-for-young and old' aspect of LBP 2, keeping the gameplay and graphics quality running at full frame rate for four players.

What's it like now getting to see other people find their creativity and develop thanks to LBP 2?

It's the best feeling in the world. We give the tools, the beauty and the inspiration, now it's their turn to make what they have in mind. We worked hard to

open up the limitations of LBP 1, so that it's now pretty damn hard not to be able to make anything you want in LBP 2. At first, the community were making homage to games and movies, but now there are unique concepts emerging. I give you a word of advice, if you are looking for talented people, look no further than LBP. Some of our most talented community creators get contacted via LBP 2 and got jobs in the game industry, that's the beauty of our virtuous loop!



STAT ATTACK
604 million
games of FIFA 11
played and rising

Sony's answer to the iPad?

Two new PlayStation tablets, but can they take on Apple?

S1

■ 9.4-inch screen is smaller than iPad 2, but it has a much better screen resolution of 1,280 x 800 compared to Apple's 1,024 x 768.

■ Oddly weighted design intended to mimic the way you hold a magazine, making it more comfortable in your hand.

■ Confirmed to have the same RAM speed as the iPad 2. GPU faster than original iPad.



BOTH

■ Front and rear cameras.

■ Uses Google's Android Honeycomb OS, which is very customisable.

■ Compatible with PlayStation Suite games library, Qriocity and a new Reader Store for eReader books.



S2

■ Oyster shell design perfect for being on the move.

■ Two 1,024 x 480 screens, each 5.5 inches. Combined much larger than iPad 2.

■ Specific functionality using the two screens for different functions, such as game controls on the lower screen.

CONCLUSION:

Sony has said it wants to be number two in the tablet market and these two devices look to have what it takes to make a big impact.

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

1	LA Noire Rockstar	NEW	Proving that Rockstar is as powerful as anything else out there, <i>LA Noire</i> has rocketed to the top.	91%
2	Call Of Duty: Black Ops Activision		Holding firm despite a wave of new titles, <i>Black Ops</i> refuses to be ignored or passed over.	94%
3	FIFA 11 EA		A small drop down the charts, but expect this one to make a last-minute comeback.	91%
4	DiRT 3 Codemasters	NEW	The Colin McRae name has gone but the third game in the <i>DiRT</i> series is as good as ever.	85%
5	Brink Bethesda	NEW	An amazing online game, but not much to write home about on your own. Keep <i>Brink</i> online.	67%
6	Killzone 3 Sony		This PS3 exclusive remains as potent as ever. Surely a sequel has to be in the works already.	80%
7	Portal 2 Valve		Falling fast but <i>Portal 2</i> is still probably our favourite game in this chart.	95%
8	Mortal Kombat Warner Bros.		This is exactly the kind of multiplayer summer gaming people love.	81%
9	Homefront THQ		Keeping its chin above the water, this was a good first showing for a new IP in this genre.	69%
10	Crysis 2 EA		With the shooter market split by so many great games <i>Crysis</i> continues to fall.	72%

PSP CHART

1	FIFA 11 EA		As families go away for the summer holidays <i>FIFA</i> once again finds new legs in the PSP charts.	69%
2	Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars Activision	NEW	With two Lego games out, TT Games should have a good summer.	NA%
3	Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy Square Enix		The <i>Final Fantasy</i> fans have been spoilt recently, but then this series is as popular as ever.	79%
4	Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean Disney	NEW	TT Games' second entry this month and another fine Lego title.	NA%
5	WWE All Stars THQ		Rounding off an excellent chart of travel-friendly titles, <i>All Stars</i> may well start to fall away soon.	NA%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

{The Vault}

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Lord Of The Rings Mini Plush

\$9.99 each at ThinkGeek.com

Cuddling up with an Orc has never been high on our list of relaxing techniques, but then neither has cuddling up to Orlando Bloom. Some people are into that, though, and if, like us, the idea of snuggling with a miniature Gandalf floats your boat then one of these plush dolls may well be up your street.



Peace Walker Snake Battle Dress Figure

£49.99 at Play.com

More Play Arts brilliance from Square Enix who continues to put out some amazing and very highly detailed action figures based on all sorts of videogame franchises. You would think it would stick with its own games, but it does great work for Capcom and Konami now, too. This Snake is particularly good.

Nariko Action Figure

\$16.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

She may not have received the recognition or love that she deserved and she may never get a second chance to prove herself, but at least Nariko got an action figure out of being one of the PS3's first exclusive's heroes. We actually still have some love for *Heavenly Sword* on *Play* and we like this figure, too.



Kino Der Toten

£20 at InsertCoinClothing.com

The Theater Of The Dead may not sound like the best title for a zombie film (too much enunciation and Shakespeare), but it did make for a good location for zombie killing in *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*. Having said that even Nuketown would probably be a good location for killing zombies.



Bake Sale

£20 at InsertCoinClothing.com

Cake. Portal guns. Science. These are the things that keep us working hard and committing to lives on the relentless front line of videogame criticism. However, we would probably drop it all for a chance to work with the true bringers of cake at Aperture Science. This shirt will cover us in the meantime.



Rockman Phone Strap Collection

\$59.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

These aren't really the cheapest phone straps we've ever seen, but with a box of eight they are very collectable and *Mega Man* fans may need to take a few deep breaths before splurging on them. Such financial decisions need to be made in consultation with an accountant of some kind in our opinion.

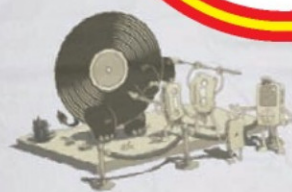


Marvel Vs Capcom Minimates

\$29.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

Inspired by the roster of *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*, this new collection of Minimates figures is only the first series featuring eight of the 36 characters who were actually on the disc. You should probably expect most of the rest to be released in bundles later in the year.

MySoti
15% OFF
these great T-shirts
This Month's Code:
PlayGear206



The Vinyl Hunters Exhibit

£21.00 at MySoti.com

We often spend our time wondering what it'd be like if all our old gadgets and tech had a life of their own when we slept or just weren't looking. This shirt captures that rather nicely.

Queen of Hearts

£21.00 at MySoti.com

With *Alice: Madness Returns* out this month we thought we'd include something with a little Wonderland flavour. The dreaded Queen of Hearts fits the bill nicely.



Resident Evil Archive Figures

£12.31 each at Play-Asia.com

As *Resident Evil* takes another spin around the block with *Operation Raccoon City* we'll be getting some new opportunities to meet the great, good and undead from the *Resi* series from a new perspective. These action figures can be viewed in 360 degrees and are actually in 3D...since they're real.



Skullcandy Gaming Headset

£58.99 each at Amazon.co.uk

There are those that specialise in headsets for the gaming public and there are those who specialise in making some of the best audio experiences known to man across all media. Skullcandy belongs squarely in the second category and you can expect plenty more from it in the coming months.

Raziel Action Figure

£14.99 at ForbiddenPlanet.co.uk

When Ian saw this new Raziel figure he got a little bit excited. Too excited really. We had to calm him down with a brick. And he actually likes Kain better. We don't even want to imagine what would have happened if he had an action figure. It could get messy. Perhaps even murderous.



HIGH FIVE

Videogame items that should be merchandised

Sir Francis Drake's Ring

Uncharted series

It seems to be playing a key role in the plot of *Uncharted 3* if the Katherine Marlowe reveal trailer was anything to go by, so who wouldn't want Francis Drake's famous ring to wear around their necks just like Nathan?



Snake's Eye Patch

Metal Gear Solid series

Obviously a couple of different versions of this. You have the more traditional patch of Naked Snake in *Metal Gear Solid 3* or the hi-tech, super-useful Solid Eye preferred by Old Snake in *Metal Gear Solid 4*. We'll take the latter.



Kratos' Loin Cloth

God Of War series

The Blades of Chaos and Athena (but not Exile yet) have already enjoyed replica treatment, but with the hot summer months bearing down upon us would we not all welcome the chance to sport Kratos's breezy man-skirt?



Wesker's Sunglasses

Resident Evil glasses

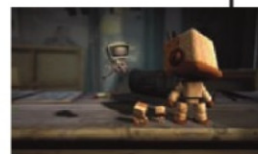
The important thing about these glasses if they were to be made into some *Resi* merchandising is that they would need to be able to make it look like your eyes were glowing red. Make that possible and we'll buy a pair.



Stephen Fry's Voice

LittleBigPlanet series

Have you ever come across those little keyring voice boxes with lines from *WWE* or *Only Fools And Horses*? That's what we're thinking about. A little box we could carry around with Fry encouraging our creativity would be nice.



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 9 June and 6 July. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-Shirts.

INSTALL

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Subscribe to our channel at www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK which has the latest trailers and funny(ish) videos we made ourselves



Play-Mag.co.uk

Opinion, analysis and hilarity can be found on our website www.play-mag.co.uk so join the debate, tell us why we're wrong and make us cry a bit



Forum

Got something to talk about? Tell us on our forum: www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Podcast

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What is wrong with gamers?

Chris blazes the entitlement complex of the modern gamer

As I'm writing this, there's a conversation occurring behind me about the fact that on the internet there are idiots, and that we shouldn't allow ourselves to be frustrated by these idiots. It's a fact as sure as the sun will rise that they will always be there and there's nothing we can do about them.

But sometimes I have to say something about the internet ignoramus's stupidity. Most of which is targeted at Valve. Y'know, the company that changed the way narrative was approached in games; released five brilliant games for the price of one; has always placed its community first – yeah, that one.

First there was *Left 4 Dead 2*. How dare Valve quickly release a sequel to a well-loved game? The nerve! Fans decided to boycott the game for no sane reason. Maybe they got bored of complaining that Valve was taking too long on *Episode 3* and decided to get up in arms about something taking too little time instead.

And now there's this whole Metacritic situation, with



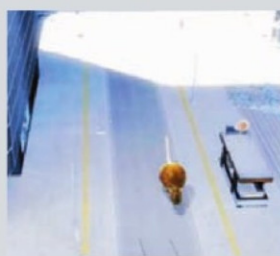
Portal'fans' using the user review system to voice complaints over the PC version. Not that anyone cares about the user reviews. But still, to see another outpouring of negativity towards Valve in such a manner is ridiculous. The reason for all this spite appears to be the fact that the PC game is a console port, and that the online store is already filled with DLC. Users have also expressed disappointment with the game's running time and the controversial ARG campaign.

It all smacks of this weird sense of entitlement that many gamers have – like Valve owes them something more than what they're getting. Like if they're not getting the best possible experience tailored exactly to their preferences they kick up a stink about it and berate one of the greatest developers going for not doing its job properly. I'm going to shut up about it now and go back to ignoring these fools who wouldn't know a good game if it gave them a right good kick up the arse.

<http://bit.ly/ITXIF>

Favourite PS3 Easter eggs

After over-indulging on chocolate recently we got thinking about our favourite Easter eggs of this generation. Track down ours and then tell us about your favourites



MIRROR'S EDGE (GIANT RAT)

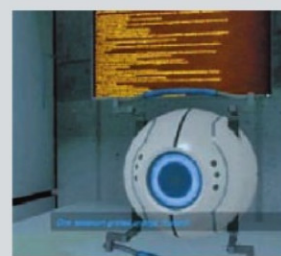
WHERE IS IT?: Chapter 8 – shoot the armoured car driver and then the middle circle in a billboard and the giant rat will chase the cars.



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM (ARKHAM CITY BLUEPRINTS)

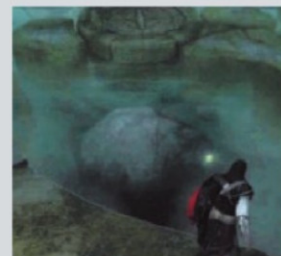
WHERE IS IT?: Hard to imagine this was only found after *Arkham City* was announced, but it's well hidden behind a normal-looking wall in Warden Sharp's office. Apply explosive gels to reveal the secret room.

<http://bit.ly/1smG00>



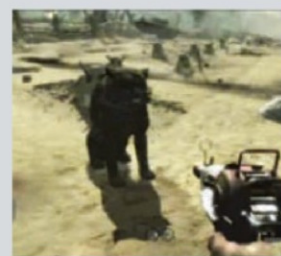
PORTAL (CAKE RECIPE)

WHERE IS IT?: Several places as it's on some computer monitors and gets recited to you by GLaDOS' Blue Sphere before you throw it in the incinerator.



ASSASSIN'S CREED II (GIANT SQUID)

WHERE IS IT?: The final chamber of the Santa Maria Delle Visitazione. Stare into the water for a few seconds and it will appear.



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR (RAY GUN)

WHERE IS IT?: To track down the Ray Gun during the story mission you will have to retrieve it from the mouth of a lion statue.

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Things you may have missed on our Facebook page



WE BOUGHT THIS LOT FOR A TENNER...

Can you believe it!? All of these 'classic' PS2 games for ten English pounds. You've gotta be impressed by that.

PLAY DISCUSSION:

Chris: "Have you heard of a silent disco?"

Aaron: "..."

Chris: "It's really cool, you put headphones on and can listen to different music..."

Aaron: "Horseshit."

Play: Back in work! Boooo...

Play: I mean, er, yay!

(Just in case bosses are reading this)

Play: PSP2 and NGP are working names for the next Sony handheld... so what do you think it will be called?

James Charlesworth: PSP2, what else?



GETTING SHIRTY...

Play vs *SSFIV* producer Yoshinori Ono in the prestigious who-has-the-brightest-t-shirt-at-Captivate contest. **Play** won.



OMG!!!!!!!

Inspired by our preview (<http://bit.ly/mxINSL>), Nick from **NowGamer** has found the world's first *MW3* screenshot.

James Ward: The most amazing thing exists in this dark and dank world. I mean, DOUBLE ANALOGUE STICKS.

Michel Sabbagh: I'm glad you loved *Brink*. Now my dream game looks EVEN BETTER!

Play: We'll set up some matches with the **Play** team at some point. We all like it and usually we don't agree on anything. Ever.

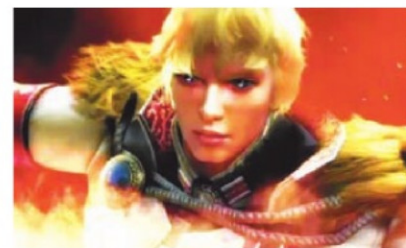
Jack Zissley Zissell: I am definitely buying this game if I get to show my gaming metal against u guys!

Play: You bring your gaming metal, we'll bring our gaming soggy paper.

You Tube

www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

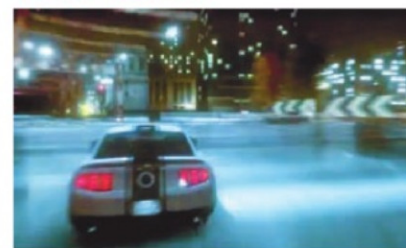
Things you may have missed on our YouTube page



SOUL CALIBUR V ANNOUNCEMENT TRAILER



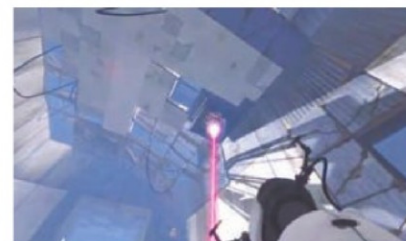
SUPREMACY MMA SHANE TRAILER



NEED FOR SPEED: THE RUN REVEAL TRAILER



CALL OF JUAREZ: THE CARTEL GAMEPLAY TRAILER



PORTAL 2 - THE REAL REVIEW SPOILERS!



SONIC GENERATIONS GAMEPLAY TRAILER

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What have you been saying to us on Twitter?

@PLAYMAG_UK

Sagat's in *SFX Tekken*. Does anyone like him? Tiger. Tiger. Tiger. Tiger.

@SILENTHITOSHURA

I think you missed a 'Tiger' in there.

@ADGE_UK

No, Adon is the kickboxer of choice in our opinion.

@NIRVANAFANWICKS

do u think *GTA IV* was a letdown??? I hated being a russian and the shooting was crap.

@PLAYMAG_UK

You're coming up with good questions today! For me it was just a fraction too dry. *Saints Row 2* was more fun.

@HITMAN_MITZ

playing through *Resistance: Fall Of Man* for the first time while PSN is still down, no trophies no glory

@PLAYMAG_UK

Haha, good thinking. How are you finding it?

@HITMAN_MITZ

loving it, for a launch title it's pretty stand out, already got the 2nd one to play after I've finishes the first lol

@PARANOIMIA

There's always the odd exception. If one PSN title is suitable for a GotY nomination, it's *Dead Nation*.

@PLAYMAG_UK

Why do you say that?

@PARANOIMIA

By their nature, most are smaller games, more suited to quick bursts. GotY is more for larger, full-price titles.

@MCBAZZA

Straight on *SOCOM 4* with my #OAPS chums - www.oaps.org

@PLAYMAG_UK

lol, loving the clan theme. What do you guys make of *SOCOM 4* so far?

@MCBAZZA

Too early to say. I haven't played a *SOCOM* since 3. It's like a mini MAG, if that makes sense. Loving co-op mode.

@SACKOFDUTY

i hope the NGP/PSP2 is a reasonable price and has *Uncharted* included with purchase :)

@PLAYMAG_UK

Sony would be mad not to have an *Uncharted* bundle. Price is the bigger issue - what's a fair price?

PLAYTM SONY @ E3



With 15 years on the front line of the games industry, Sony has been at the heart of making the Electronic Entertainment Expo one of the most exciting and important events in the gaming calendar. And this is why it rocks LA each year



♥ 1. It all started here

It was at E3 in 1995 that Sony brought its PlayStation from Japan to the West, showcasing what Nintendo was missing out on when it scrapped its collaboration. From this moment on E3 and PlayStation grew hand in hand. That particular year Sony had only one thing on its mind and it wasn't grandstanding first-party exclusives like in the years that would follow. That *Twisted Metal* and *Warhawk* are really the only titles to have survived that E3 showcase tells you all about that. The only thing that mattered was the number 299, the amount in dollars the PlayStation would be launching at a few months later. That was \$100 less than the Sega Saturn and with the promise of 200 games in development the PS bandwagon was started. After that Sony and E3 would never be separated.



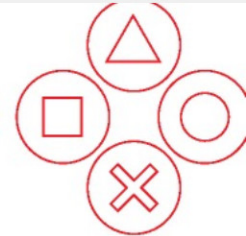
♥ 2. Making us believe

As Sony tech has got stronger and stronger it has been able to shock us with better and better demos. Some of these new trailers and live gameplay sessions have been so good that people didn't want to believe they were real. The first that comes to mind is *MGS 2*'s appearance at E3 in 2000. The queues to watch it were legendary and it was only a trailer. Why was everyone so excited? Because Konami claimed it used only in-game footage and it was showcasing exactly what the PS2 was going to be able to deliver. It was a similar story in 2005, this time with the PS3 as Sony revealed the first footage of *Killzone 2*. There were those who couldn't believe their eyes. There were others who wouldn't believe. But time proved that Guerrilla had pulled off the visual masterclass it had promised.



♥ 3. Where legends were born

While 1995's E3 wasn't really the place for finding new icons and heroes for the games industry, 1996 had plenty and from this point on E3 was the place where the future legends of PlayStation were born. First were Crash Bandicoot and Lara Croft, two of the most important characters in PlayStation's history both appearing at the 1996 show. In later years *GTA III* was revealed to very little acclaim (people just didn't seem to understand what it would become) and we would be introduced to Nathan Drake, Cole MacGrath, Sackboy and Toriko. With each new generation Sony has made a point of refreshing with a new roster of iconic characters and E3 has always been the place for them to be introduced to the world.



High



\$299!!! Hell Yeah! (1995)



Metal Gear becomes Solid (1997)



The Gabe Reversal (2010)

THE HIGHS & LOWS OF E3



\$599!!! Ouch! (2006)



PSPgo... oh no (2009)

Low

CONCLUSION

As you read this you will hopefully have seen or caught the fallout from Sony's latest E3 epic and we're sure it will have delivered. As the PS3 has really only just got into its stride we know that great things are yet to come and whether this year or next we also know that when it comes to big announcements and earth-shattering exclusives Sony will always find a way to deliver when it visits Los Angeles in the summer.



Genji 2 promised historically accurate Japanese battles then gave us giant enemy crabs to fight.

♥ 4. Even when it's bad, it's good

Sony's E3 gaffs are probably as memorable and important as its triumphs. The most important was the train wreck of a show at E3 2006 where the pricing and first games for the PlayStation 3 would be revealed. The biggest issue was the console launch price of \$599, which Ken Kutaragi would later describe as "too cheap." That didn't go down well.

Neither did Kaz Hirai's strained attempt to garner interest in a PSP version of *Ridge Racer* by shouting "Riiiiidge Raceeeeeer!" No Kaz, we still don't care. And the final blow was the *Genji 2* demo promising historically accurate Japanese battles followed swiftly by "so here's this giant enemy crab" and "flip it over to attack its weak point for massive damage". It was painful, but in a way that's easy to laugh about now.

♥ 5. Feeling good to be a gamer

The reason we all love E3 and hang such high hopes around it each and every year is not because we want to see the big announcements made in one place or even because we all get to go. The reason we love it and believe in it is that it rarely fails to make us feel good about being PlayStation gamers. Last year's show was a great example of this. It didn't deliver any hammer blows in the announcement or reveal departments (*inFamous 2* trailer, *Twisted Metal* reveal, *Portal 2* coming to PS3 the standouts), but it did have a passionate and rabble-rousing speech from fictional VP of stuff, Kevin Butler:

"Though we may pledge allegiance to different flags, we all serve one king, one master and his name is gaming! Forever may he reign!"



Despite the big E3 announcement, the PSPgo failed to get gamers excited.

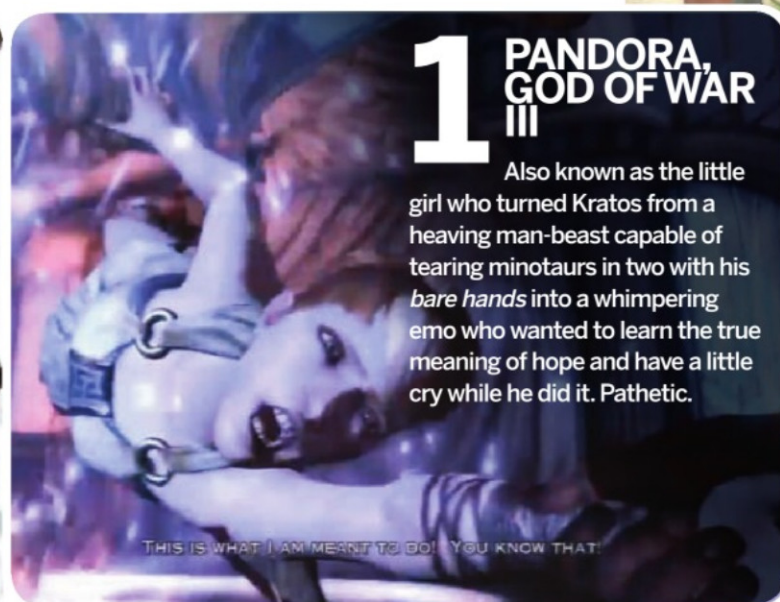
5 ANNOYING KIDS IN VIDEOGAMES

Films have had annoying kids for years and, in their quest to imitate movies, games too have a few irritating whippersnappers of their own...



4 LAURA, SILENT HILL 2

Not only has James Sunderland lost himself in the ashen mists of Silent Hill and found himself stalked by a sexual deviant with a triangle for a head, but he's also got to put up with the annoying teasing of a precocious little blonde girl. If we were James Sunderland we'd have given her a good clip round the ear. That'd teach her.



1 PANDORA, GOD OF WAR III

Also known as the little girl who turned Kratos from a heaving man-beast capable of tearing minotaurs in two with his bare hands into a whimpering emo who wanted to learn the true meaning of hope and have a little cry while he did it. Pathetic.



3 KATEY, DEAD RISING 2

This little brat just had to go and get herself infected, didn't she? This means that every 24 hours in Dead Rising 2 Chuck has to run all the way back through shopping malls and casinos absolutely heaving with brain-hungry zombies just to give her an injection of Zombrex. Kids. They're so demanding.



5 FIRSTBORN, JERICHO

Few games use a child as their final boss, but Jericho was a bit of a weird game overall, wasn't it? Your final face-off is indeed against a small floating toddler. It's not an irritating boss battle, just long, protracted and boring, and leads to one of the most rubbish endings in videogames ever.

2 JASON, HEAVY RAIN

Jason? Jaaaaason? JAAAAAASOOOON! If Jason had never gone and got himself lost like the excitable little git he is then we'd never have had to continually press (X) and shout his name just because the option was there. Damn you, Jason. We'll never be able to hear that name the same way again.

TEAM PICKS

The Play team's most irritating videogame children



CHRIS

MARSTON JR

Most games I play don't feature children, as most games I play have shooting and apparently shooting kids is bad. Red Dead's Jack Marston is an annoying little git, though.



JON

VAULT KIDS

The bullying brats in Vault 101 (Fallout 3) are pretty high up my list of characters I would happily slap. And that's exactly what I did when I had the chance. Thank goodness it's only a game.



IAN

LOCOROCOS

I've decided they're kids. They're sloppy idiots that spout gibberish and need your full attention in case THEY DIE. Therefore they're the same, and therefore they're the worst.



RYAN

LITTLE SISTERS

Spotting one means you're about to get your face stomped in by a size 16 Big Daddy boot. Have fun picking your teeth out his sole.

Dante

One of the slickest cats in the world of Capcom, *Devil May Cry*'s leading man is still the coolest man around, even if Capcom is changing him up soon

THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

Dante's style is probably the most instantly recognisable thing about him. For all the changes his character has seen since the first *Devil May Cry*, the pure white locks, flowing red trench coat and leather trousers and boots instantly tell you who you're looking at.

Series creator Hideki Kamiya was inspired by a number of sources in developing Dante as he attempted to make as stylish and cool a hero as he could. The hair and coat combo in particular were important to him, making him visually striking and with red being the traditional colour worn by Japanese heroes.

A GOOD KIND OF DEMON

The contradiction at the heart of Dante's personality and abilities is that he's the son of a demon that fought to protect humanity. Despite being half-human Dante is far more powerful than just about every other demonic force he's faced. What this boils down to is being virtually impervious to all attacks, as well as being faster, stronger and more agile than your average human. Throw in a little Demon Trigger action and you've got a guy you'd much rather was on your side than against you.

TAUNT TONIGHT

Dante's second most important quality is his charismatic personality. In this area Kamiya and Capcom have played a very savvy game. Creating a cocky and brash character without making him seem like a dick is a challenge few devs can cope with. Of course it hasn't always worked. With *Devil May Cry 2* Capcom attempted to make Dante quieter and more serious only for him to lose his charm. Fans obviously have similar fears about Ninja Theory's attempt to revamp the franchise for *DmC*. So long as he keeps taunting bosses ten times bigger than him, we'll be happy.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

For such a cocky git with so little understanding of money, Dante seems to have no trouble keeping a tight-knit group of friends around him. For starters you couldn't ask for two better-looking companions than Trish and Lady, but better yet they've got brains in-between their pretty little ears. Dante clearly doesn't have time for the dim-witted.

Throw in his incredibly cool twin brother Virgil and *Devil May Cry 4*'s Nero and you have a guy who seems all the more attractive and awesome thanks to the company he keeps.

POSING TO STRIKE

The key fighting stances and what they mean



Crossed Wires
When Dante really wants someone to feel his utter disdain he unloads while crossing his guns over each other.



Face Melter
Not content with simply using his unlimited guns, Dante has been known to rock out in his fight against demonic forces.



Over The Shoulder
Dante clearly has senses that we can only dream of. Being able to aim accurately behind is one of them.



Sword Strike
When he gets bored Dante likes to finish the job by dashing in with Rebellion and pointing out his enemies' errors.



Straight Shooter
If Dante is taking someone very seriously he'll simply shoot them straight in the face.



AND FINALLY...
Where hype and hyperbole a... come

stop
please



EA getting subbed

THEY SAY: EA Sports plans to launch a subscription service giving members access to free DLC and the chance to download the latest games in full and ahead of their release date.
WE SAY: This was apparently mentioned in a user-survey, but that hardly makes it a plan. More like some brainstorming around the whole Project \$10 thing.



Guitar Hero to rise again?

THEY SAY: Activision wants to resurrect the *Guitar Hero* franchise despite killing off the series earlier in the year off the back of poor sales.
WE SAY: It was mentioned in a leaked memo, but only if and when people start caring about *Guitar Hero* again.



Catherine too saucy for US

THEY SAY: The cover art for Atlus's *Catherine* has been censored in certain US stores as it was considered too raunchy for their shelves.
WE SAY: Who cares? The new art just focused on the headshots of the game's female characters. The old art wasn't all that sexy anyway.

FIFA VS FPS: WHAT MAKES YOU ANGRIER?

Sport more dangerous than gunfire, says research

THEY SAY A UK-based study into the effects of playing violent games against playing sports titles has found that gamers become more agitated by conceding goals and fouls than by killing enemies in an FPS. The results were revealed by Dr Simon Goodson and Sarah Pearson of Huddersfield University. "As participants reacted with more agitation during the football game, it seems the effects of violent videogames have been misrepresented in the past," was Dr Goodson's take on the research.

WE SAY We here on **Play** have long known of the terrible dangers inherent to playing games like *FIFA* and *PES*. We take this so seriously that in the run-up to the release of *FIFA 11* we asked its producer David Rutter how it felt to be involved in one of the most frustrating games ever made. "It's brilliant to be involved in one of the most *satisfying* games ever made," he said. "It's good, and I'm very lucky."



WARNING
This man is considered skilled and dangerous

VALVE ABANDONS SOLO GAMING

It's multiplayer or bust, say overexcited scaremongers

THEY SAY *Half-Life* and *Portal* dev Valve is to turn its back on single-player gaming and go completely multiplayer despite the reception to *Portal 2*. This revelation came off the back of a behind-the-scenes app released on iTunes. "Portal 2 will probably be Valve's last game with an isolated single-player experience," said app author Geoff Keighley. Evidence of Valve's interest in online gaming was drawn from co-op gameplay in *Portal 2* as well as its continued support for *Left 4 Dead* and *Team Fortress 2*.

WE SAY Speaking to a high school student around the release of *Portal 2* Gabe Newell clarified his thinking about single-player games and how they need to evolve. "Single-player is great, but we also have to recognise that you have friends and wanted to have that connected as well," Newell told YouTube channel 'theythatare'. He went on to reference social media as one example of how players could share their experience. So, no single-player-only games from Valve rather than no single-player at all.



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PSP2 HANDS ON!

NO MORE UNCERTAINTY. NO MORE CYNICISM. WE HAVE THE FIRST EVER UK HANDS-ON WITH PSP2 AND OUR VERDICT IS THAT YOU SHOULD START GETTING VERY, VERY EXCITED...

You tend to get an idea of whether you like something or not as soon as you pick it up. As soon as we picked up the Nintendo 3DS, for example, we could see that it was a poorly designed and hasty piece of kit that wouldn't get turned on again for another eight months until the real games came out for it. Lifting up the noticeably large PSP2 for the first time, we were filled with thoughts along the lines of "it's quite big, really". Because it's big. Really, it is.

But our thoughts progressed beyond this superficial nonsense when it came down to actually playing the games. From the look of the titles through to the standard controls (a second analogue stick!) and onto the new features like touch screen and Sixaxis motion control, there was little about PSP2 that didn't impress us.

The general theme of the games on show was that they look impressive. The claims they are as good-looking as PS3 titles seems a tad far-fetched, but they really aren't that far off. Sony is emphasising the Play, Create, Share motto and a number of titles took full advantage of this, and PSP2's connectivity options are

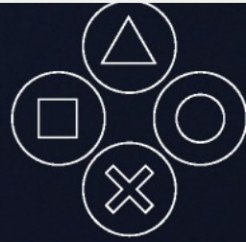
THE FACT OUR LOFTY EXPECTATIONS WERE EASILY MET SHOULD TELL YOU ENOUGH

sure to mean you won't be left wanting when you need to download that new track somebody's made for you on *ModNation Racers*. Every game also took advantage of elements like the touch screen to add nifty little touches that mixed up the usual gaming experience.

And rather than a weak launch line-up where we have to wait months for anything good to surface, PSP2 will be supported by some heavy-hitters from day one.

Hardware-wise, and beyond the initial surprise at the size of the unit, things look generally impressive. It should be noted that the units we were able to get hands-on with were still development ones and not indicative of the PSP2's final design, but we're working under the assumption they're close to the finished product.

The machine is big, but it's not heavy. The five-inch OLED screen is a thing of beauty and draws illicit reactions similar to those people had when seeing the original PSP's screen for the first time – it's bright, capable of higher resolutions than before and very beautiful. At least until you rub your greasy thumbs all over it. Which you will have to do, thanks to the touch



screen – which we found to be responsive and accurate. Ditto for the rear touchpad, though oddly it felt like the actual casing of the machine, rather than a clearly defined texture to differentiate it – maybe this will be different on the finished unit.

Generally speaking, we were impressed with PSP2. We wouldn't go so far as to say we were blown away by it, but the fact our lofty expectations were easily met should tell you enough. The selection of games on offer at launch will be impressive, it genuinely is a next-generation device and none of the added features feel crowbarred in to the games that we played. Well, except for *Everybody's Golf* – but then you can't have everything. Thanks to our time with the machine, PSP2 has just gone from "we want one" to "WE WANT ONE".



> 6 REASONS PSP2 WILL BLOW YOU AWAY

If you're unsure about Sony's handheld sequel, you won't be now

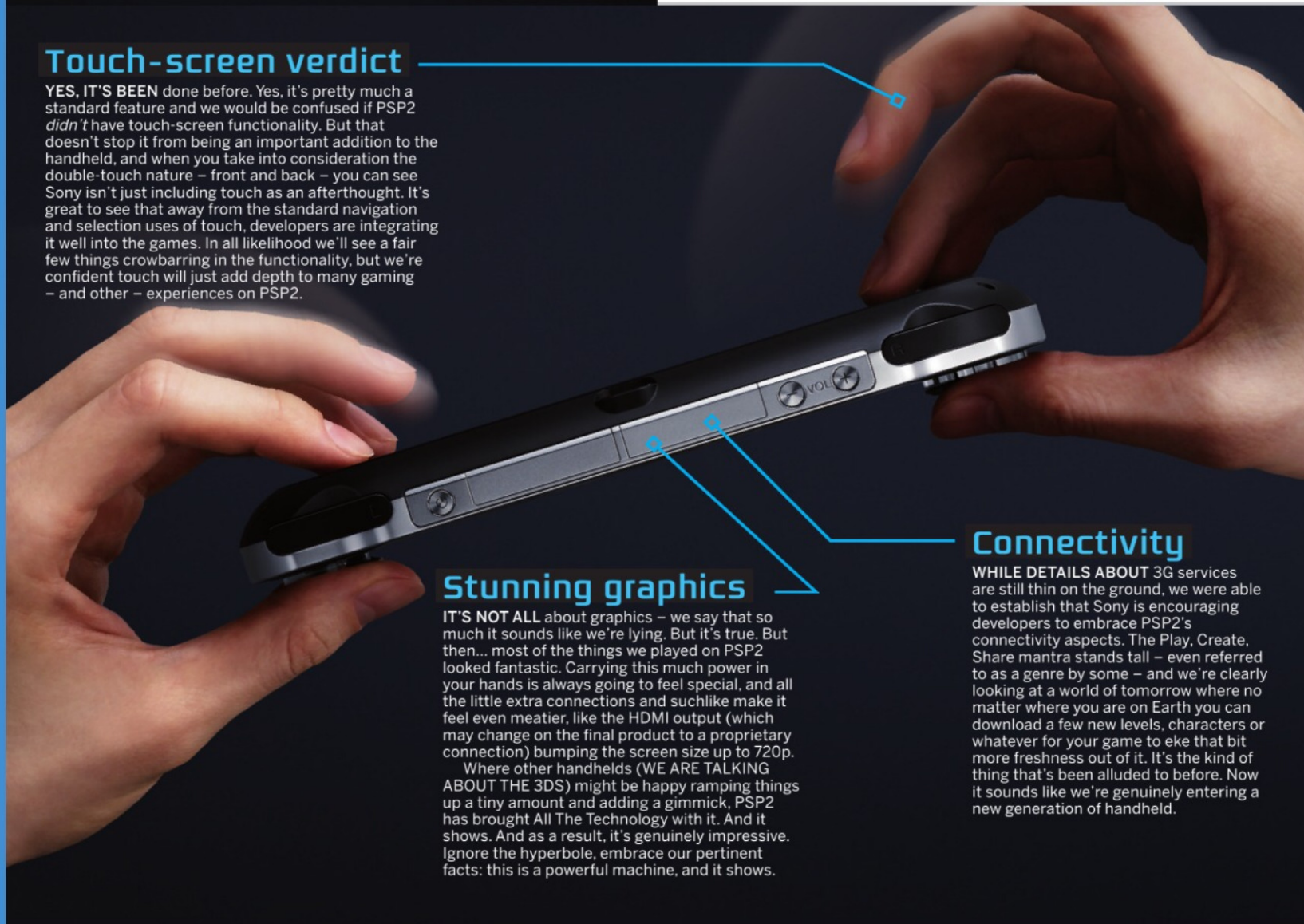


Twin sticks

IT SEEMS LIKE such a trite thing to point out, but it really does make a genuine, noticeable difference. Having two analogue sticks – that's as in proper analogue sticks, not PSP-like nubs – makes a lot of difference in the games on PSP2 and how you can play them. Mainly because in third-person games you can control the camera easily and in first-person titles you can look around easily. We wanted this feature forever ago, but even getting it late is good enough.

Touch-screen verdict

YES, IT'S BEEN done before. Yes, it's pretty much a standard feature and we would be confused if PSP2 *didn't* have touch-screen functionality. But that doesn't stop it from being an important addition to the handheld, and when you take into consideration the double-touch nature – front and back – you can see Sony isn't just including touch as an afterthought. It's great to see that away from the standard navigation and selection uses of touch, developers are integrating it well into the games. In all likelihood we'll see a fair few things crowbarring in the functionality, but we're confident touch will just add depth to many gaming – and other – experiences on PSP2.



Stunning graphics

IT'S NOT ALL about graphics – we say that so much it sounds like we're lying. But it's true. But then... most of the things we played on PSP2 looked fantastic. Carrying this much power in your hands is always going to feel special, and all the little extra connections and suchlike make it feel even meatier, like the HDMI output (which may change on the final product to a proprietary connection) bumping the screen size up to 720p. Where other handhelds (WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE 3DS) might be happy ramping things up a tiny amount and adding a gimmick, PSP2 has brought All The Technology with it. And it shows. And as a result, it's genuinely impressive. Ignore the hyperbole, embrace our pertinent facts: this is a powerful machine, and it shows.

Connectivity

WHILE DETAILS ABOUT 3G services are still thin on the ground, we were able to establish that Sony is encouraging developers to embrace PSP2's connectivity aspects. The Play, Create, Share mantra stands tall – even referred to as a genre by some – and we're clearly looking at a world of tomorrow where no matter where you are on Earth you can download a few new levels, characters or whatever for your game to eke that bit more freshness out of it. It's the kind of thing that's been alluded to before. Now it sounds like we're genuinely entering a new generation of handheld.



Launch games

LAUNCH TITLES FOR any platform always seem to fall short. From what we've seen, there's every chance PSP2 will buck this particular trend. Many of the games we were able to play will be available on day one, and there were some real heavy hitters doing the rounds. Sony has clearly stuck its flag in the ground and is bringing us games that will appeal to most gamers – but more importantly to us, it's bringing us games that we actually *really want to play*. Though we've no idea what that 'Uncharted' thing is. Turn over to see more detailed views on the individual games.



Two cameras?

ADDING A CAMERA to things used to be a simple way of ticking another box on a list of features. Adding two cameras was double that. But seeing as we now live in the future, it seems adding cameras adds a whole new reality, along with the ability to put your face in what you're playing. Augmented Reality is being pushed by Sony just as much as it is with the 3DS, meaning you can bring the real world into games in interesting, silly little ways. If this means more *Invizimals* – and thus more Brian Blessed – we are totally on-board.

PSP2: HANDS ON!



Q&A: SONY TALKS PSP2

Michael Denny, Sony Worldwide Studios Europe VP, answers our (occasionally) difficult questions

Do you see iPhone and Android devices as direct competitors?

We're setting out to the portable gaming market, it is a successor to the PSP. We have to be aware of that landscape. The competition is very wide now, in that there are many devices and any entertainment device is rightly conceived as a competitor. I think that's a good thing in a way, it keeps us on our toes and keeps us thinking of what we need to put out there. Clearly with our device we think we are differentiated with the depth and richness of experience we can give compared to all other devices out there.

Is there still space in the market for a traditional handheld? The disappointing sales for 3DS show that might not be the case.

We still think there's a massive opportunity for a gaming device that is taking us on to the next generation of gaming experiences. We believe with NGP we are going to offer that. As I say, PSP over 50 million users, there's now a lot of casual game users out there – I think there's still a massive appetite for gaming on a portable platform. I think it's about having a platform that has clearly moved on and can differentiate to the competition.

When will we be told the price?

We haven't set a date for when we are announcing a price.

Can you give us a rough period?

Sorry.

And what about battery life expectations?

It's not something we've confirmed as yet. Obviously it's something that's massively important to a portable console, something we're looking at all the time. We want to get the best out of it.

Do you think PSP2 arriving so late after 3DS will help or hinder it?

I don't think it's much about the timing. The important point is that when we come out with a new device it's clearly differentiated, it clearly has new feature sets that excite our consumers that like PlayStation gaming and hopefully a new wider generation of consumers who like gaming. As long as we're providing a new experience – as I say, the deeper, richer experience we're giving – I think we're confident people will enjoy the NGP experience.

PSP2 games will be on par with PS3 games – what about price?

Without getting into pricing structures of the games themselves, let me look at the question in terms of that PS3 comparison. I think the exciting thing about the NGP games is that in terms of performance they're certainly closer to PS3 performance than PSP performance. But in terms of ease of development, and even budgets for games themselves, they're closer to PSP development than PS3.

So PSP games are playable on PSP2?

What we're saying is that PSP/PSN games will be available to download on your NGP. When you play *Resistance Retribution* you'll see there's a graphics-smoothing technology that really takes advantage of that new, five-inch OLED screen, as well as the ability to remap buttons. A game like *Resistance* really feels like it should have been made for NGP.

What about transferring UMDs over? Is it purely PSP/PSN titles?

At this stage we're going to look at all possibilities, but what I'm doing today is confirming that those PSP/PSN games will be available. ➤

> 5 BEST GAMES

Why they're even better than you thought

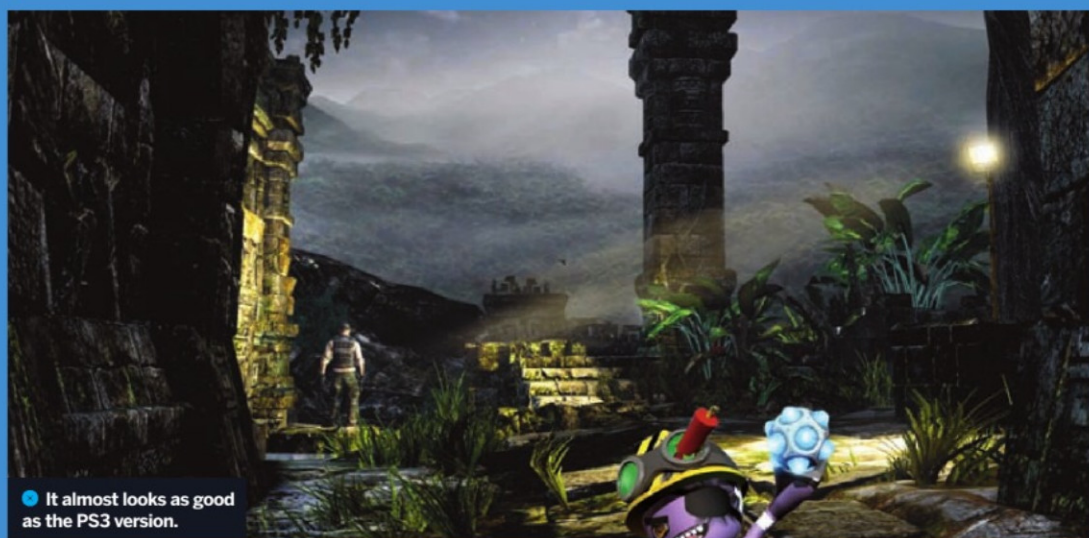


• Nathan Drake on a portable device – we've never been happier.

Uncharted: Golden Abyss

Publisher Sony Developer Naughty Dog

Yes, believe the hype: it looks as good as it does in these screens. That means it looks *almost* as good as the PS3 version. And it's very much an *Uncharted* game. Taking place before the events of *Drake's Fortune*, *Golden Abyss* integrates all PSP2's features – though none of them are mandatory. A particular highlight is using the touch screen to draw a climbing route – simple, quick and functional. Sixaxis sniper aiming, less so. All in all, though, this could be PSP2's killer app.



• It almost looks as good as the PS3 version.



• Cross-platform play will allow PS3 players to race those playing on PSP2.

Wipeout 2048

Publisher Sony Developer Sony

Chronologically, this is the first in the *Wipeout* series. It's still a step forward, mind you, offering wider tracks and a more robust, progressive online mode that should prove welcoming for newcomers to the franchise.

It can be controlled using tilt to steer and touchpads for acceleration and weapons and – surprisingly – we found this method to be both easy to get used to and very useful. Throw in cross-platform play, meaning that PlayStation 3 users can race against PSP2 users, and you're onto another potentially great addition for the *Wipeout* series.



ModNation Racers

Publisher Sony Developer Sony

We were told we could create tracks in a matter of seconds, before having a demonstration of this – that took just a matter of seconds. The touch screen allows you to literally draw your track however you want before adding details; once done you can then share it with the world.

The actual racing, however, left a fair bit to be desired. A choppy frame rate made every competition look like a slideshow and is something that will definitely need to be optimised before *ModNation Racers* gets released. The creative side is definitely impressive, though.



Little Deviants

Publisher Sony Developer Sony

The award for Best Game That Does Everything In Its Power To Use All Of PSP2's Features definitely goes to this collection of around 30 mini-games. Touch screen, touchpad, camera and Sixaxis were all put through their paces in the demo we played, and all worked nicely in this kid-friendly party game (very much in the vein of *Raving Rabbids*). It's unlikely to be much more than a distraction in the long run, but it was a good laugh to play about with. So much so that our notes on the game read gibberish like 'giant octopus thing' and 'VICTORY', which is us conveying our sheer EXCITEMENT. Capital letters help with that too, obviously.

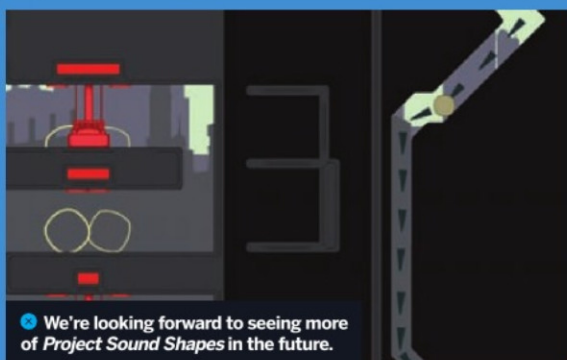
It's often new games that kick off the success of a new handheld rather than sequels to established IPs. Sony will be hoping that *Little Deviants* will do for PSP2 what *Tetris* did for Game Boy, *Nintendogs* did for Nintendo DS and *Monster Hunter* did for PSP (in Japan at least).



Sony will be hoping this fun little time-waster can kick things off for PSP2.



Little Deviants makes excellent use of all of PSP2's features.

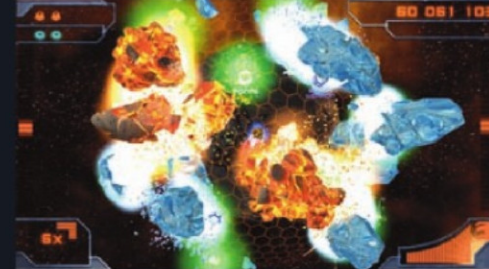


We're looking forward to seeing more of Project Sound Shapes in the future.

Project Sound Shapes (working title)

Publisher Sony Developer Qeazy Games

The biggest surprise of the demonstration was this 'music platformer' from *Everyday Shooter* creator Jonathan Mak's studio, Qeazy Games. It's difficult to explain, but if you think of a cross between Mak's previous title, *Super Meat Boy* and *Lumines* you'll be on the right track. Players can create levels using the same system the developers have used to make the game, share them with the world, edit the creations of others and generally play a game that brought a gigantic smile to our faces.



BEST OF THE REST

ELSEWHERE AT THE showcase we were able to have some quality time with the wonderful *Everybody's Golf* – think the PS3 version, except with a rather pointless touch-screen method of positioning your character when teeing off. Brilliant, in other words.

Hustle Kings is another title seeing PS3-PSP2 cross-platform play, along with a few interesting features like the ability to – in effect – play by email, taking one shot and sending it to your friend, awaiting their response. It looks lovely, too.

Reality Fighters did come across as little more than a tech demo, but if we're thinking like that it was pretty impressive. Map your face onto a brawler, point the camera at the area around you and see a fight break out on screen. The 360-degree photograph feature should be an app in its own right.

For *Super Stardust Delta* we made only one note: "looks lovely". Mainly because it looks lovely, but is otherwise an update of the fantastic PS3/PSP title. Touch-screen functionality has been added for smartbombs, but the best feature is clearly the fact it's a proper twin-stick shooter on handheld now.

Finally, Sony had a demo of PSP emulation on PSP2 running *Resistance: Retribution*. Texture smoothing made things look a bit nicer than before, but the ability to remap buttons meant the game can now be played how you always thought it should be played. Again, thanks to twin sticks.

A REVELATORY EXPERIENCE

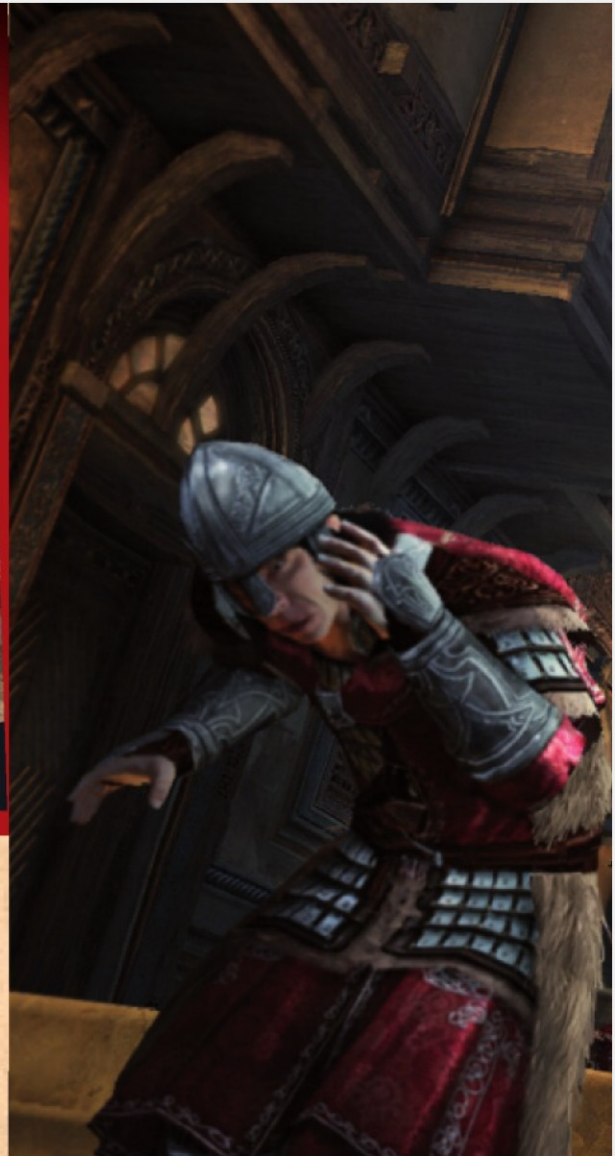
Another Assassin's Creed title? Already? You might view Ubisoft's yearly updates as a money-making ploy. However, this third entry into the series looks to be anything but a lazy cash-in. Indeed, Revelations may be a more apt title than any of us could have hoped for.

ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS





☛ The Hookblade makes Ezio faster and more deadly than ever before. Also, cooler.



> **L**et's consider last year's *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. Released a year to the day after its predecessor *Assassin's Creed II*, our inbuilt Pavlovian response – as gamers accustomed to half-hearted expansion packs that barely build on the original experience – was one of cynicism. 'Assassin's Creed 2.5' was the instinctive response, with fans of the original game expecting little more than a new environment and a few new characters.

But what we got felt more akin to *Assassin's Creed II*, 2. It didn't just expand on the 2009 game, but built upwards and outwards. Ubisoft developed and broadened its ideas, increasing the scope far beyond what we had seen in *Assassin's Creed II* and offering an experience that felt deeper and more varied. *Brotherhood* wasn't an expansion but a new direction for the series, as far removed from the repetitiveness of the original 2007 game as conceivable.

The series has come a long way since then and *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* looks to have had just as much affection and care poured into it as any single triple-A release. Boasting a new city, new abilities, a refined multiplayer, and higher production values than ever before witnessed in a Ubisoft game, it's a far more loved and nurtured product than most IP follow-ups. It feels more like *Grand Theft Auto III's San Andreas* chapter than something like *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith*.

But how can a project of such scope have been completed in such a short time? We only just polished off the final missions in *Brotherhood*, and already we're discussing the next chapter. Surely it's going to be a rush job? Well, no. Ubisoft isn't just assigning one studio to its development but six.

Ubisoft Montreal is on principal development with Ubisoft Quebec and Ubisoft Singapore also collaborating on the single-player. Ubisoft Annecy is developing multiplayer with collaboration with Ubisoft Bucharest, and Ubisoft Massive (aiiiiii!) is working on a very special feature we'll get to in a bit.

It's an impressive combined effort between some very disparate studios, and it looks to have led to one

of the finest *Assassin's Creeds* yet – a culmination of all that has come before and a dramatic conclusion to Ezio Auditore Di Firenze's narrative arc.

So, how has Ubisoft approached the beginning of the end? *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* concluded with Ezio killing Cesare Borgia and secreting the Apple of Eden in the Santa Maria in Aracoeli. *Revelations* picks up again some years later with an older and battle-hardened Ezio travelling to Masyaf, Syria – the origins of the Assassin Order – in search of the lost library of Altaïr Ibn-La'Ahad. Yes. That Altaïr.

Ezio soon realises that hidden deep within the library is a very powerful artifact – an artifact the Templars could use to crush the Assassins and take control of all of humankind's destiny once and for all. Ezio's pilgrimage becomes a race against time, as he's tasked with finding five keys hidden in the city of Constantinople – or, as it's known today, Istanbul.

Having been known over the years as Byzantium, Nova Roma and Tsarigrad, few cities changed hands with more frequency than Constantinople, a city that

It's an alluring place, a cosmopolitan mosaic of different cultures living together in a sprawling city

has played home to Greeks, Romans and Ottomans. It was considered the cross roads of the world in 1511 – the Wall Street of the 16th Century, if you will.

It's an alluring place, a cosmopolitan mosaic of different cultures living together in a sprawling city of wooden architecture, stone monuments, and opulently constructed buildings. There's a busier feel, with four different districts of Constantin, Beyazid, Imperial and Galata offering their own architectural style and a denser, earthy, more exotic ambience. You can almost smell the fragrant, intoxicating odours of shisha, spice and incense drifting through the merchant streets and thin, timbered alleys.

Hanging over the city and Ezio's adventures within it is the heated Ottoman war over succession to the throne – a plot that will introduce characters similar

to the evil Borgias of *Brotherhood*. The original *Assassin's Creed's* Altaïr will also play a significant role. You'll play as him, but not through Desmond – you'll be accessing his memories through Ezio. How's this possible, you ask? Well, remember those five keys we mentioned? They're described as "first civilisation hard drives for memory", allowing Ezio to relive key moments in Altaïr's life. These playable sequences will reveal a parallel between the two assassins and have an important effect on Ezio's decisions and actions at the end of *Revelations*.

But what about that character we just skimmed over? Over the credits of *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* we learnt that Desmond, who we last saw knifing Lucy in the Temple Of Juno and consequently slipping into a coma, was put back into the Animus. In *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* he will awake to find himself in a mysterious and surreal dreamscape which

looks something akin to the sparse, white loading screens of the previous games combined with the limbo level of *Inception*. These are the sections we mentioned earlier, which are being designed by Ubisoft Massive in Sweden. Everything Desmond experiences here is described as "a projection of his own mind filtered through the Animus's circuitry" – all fragmented memories, riddles, signs, symbols and half-remembered dreams.

From here Desmond can access different memories in new ways, and in doing so he's able to find his way through the maze of his own subconscious to an upper level where he can finally wake up. Just like Ariadne in *Inception* he will learn to control and bend the Animus, meaning that he can create platforms and navigate this strange



landscape in mind-bending architectural puzzles that demand intelligence as well as dexterity.

But enough of these impossible surrealist constructions encountered in an illusory comatose trance, what about the actual, *concrete* gameplay? What's different here than that which we experienced in *Brotherhood*?

Well, in *Revelations* you will still be able to call in your Brotherhood for assistance during a fight or to assassinate a target, but they'll have far more personality, making any untimely deaths all the more significant. There will also be more options to customise your assassins, such as selecting different weapons and class for each.

On top of this there will be something of a chess match occurring not just across Constantinople, but across the entire Mediterranean. Constantinople will be dotted with Assassin's Dens, similar to *Brotherhood*'s Borgia towers but with a twist – the Templars can retake these dens, meaning you have to keep an eye on what's happening across the city.

Recruits can now also be trained to level 15, making them Master Assassins and allowing you to delegate control of a den over to them. You can also send them on exotic missions across the Mediterranean to take different cities in a mini-game similar to Risk. Not only does this impact on the pacing of the game, but it effects the economy system and the ability to control the ingredients you collect for bomb crafting.

Yes, bombs. Ezio will be equipped with various explosives, created via a non-linear crafting system. Unlike *World Of Warcraft*, which demands specific ingredients, any concoction of ingredients will result in something useful. There are a vast number of different explosives that can be tailored towards your play style. A decoy bomb, for instance, can be used to distract guards and allow Ezio to slip by undetected, while other bombs might litter caltrops across the ground, stopping any pursuer who happens to be chasing you. Ingredients for these bombs can be found across Constantinople – gunpowder may be found at an arsenal, while poisonous mushrooms can be located in abandoned cisterns and given to doctors to create toxic bombs. More powerful components ➤

Sightseeing

Constantinople is a rich, varied city built on a multi-levelled terrain, making it unique among previous *Creed* locations. It also means that from almost wherever you stand you'll be able to take in a vast vista of buildings and structures, including many real-life monuments such as...



THE VALENS AQUEDUCT



THE BEYAZIT CAMII



MAIDEN'S TOWER



THE HAGIA SOPHIA



TOPKAPI PALACE



GALATA TOWER



Hide & Seek

Ubisoft's taking a good multiplayer, and potentially making it great

There are several changes to the multiplayer that we first saw in *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. The cast has changed, with new characters like the Vanguard, Crusader, Thespian and Deacon now playable. New customisation features mean you can change your weapons and apparel. You can also set up a clan, design a tag and have it appear on their clothes. More exciting are the new modes. Hijack takes focus away from stealth, instead encouraging free run and navigation. The aim is to find and hold a chest while other assassins hunt you down. The longer you hold the chest, the more points you'll earn. *Revelations'* multiplayer will also offer Story quests. You're effectively playing as Templars in training, and as you progress you'll see cut-scenes and learn new information about the true nature of Abstergo.

● The action scenes in *Revelations* are without a doubt the series' best.

➤ may require Ezio to fight through guarded parts of the city or take on Contract Assignments that send him to foreign cities.

You're also equipped with the new Hookblade – a hidden weapon on Ezio's right arm, tipped with an Eagle head that forms a hook. It can be utilised for gruesome execution moves, but its main focus is increased flow, mobility and navigation speed. Ezio can use the Hookblade to propel to previously unreachable outcroppings and handholds, or latch onto zip lines. Naturally, you can unhook from zip lines mid-slide and drop onto enemies for a swift air assassination.

It's all part of making *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* a faster, more action-packed gameplay experience. Remember the Leonardo's Contraptions missions from *Brotherhood*? They're nothing in comparison to the set pieces here. There are secret locations such as the Forum Of Ox, an underground river that Ezio must use to escape pursuers in a high-action boat chase. The Galada Tower demands steel nerves in an intense navigational moment that plays on a sense of vertigo. The Urban Cistern turns Ezio into Caped Crusader, the location laid out like a predator's maze and allowing Ezio to pick off his prey from the rafters.

Yet the most exhilarating moment we're shown begins with Ezio standing on the parapet of a stronghold, rope around his neck. He's about to be hung, but before his captor can push him, Ezio leaps into the abyss, swooping around and lassoing the loose length of rope up into the air and around his enemy's throat. As the soldier asphyxiates, Ezio struggles free and drops onto the cliffs below as the camera pans out to show enemies giving chase. The camerawork is brilliant, recalling *Uncharted* in its seamless interweaving of scripted moments with gameplay. These production values promise to make *Revelations* the best game in the series yet. Like *Brotherhood*, *Revelations* feels less like an add-on and more like *Assassin's Creed II*, 3.

It's a disappointing thought that *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* will mark the end of Altair's and Ezio's destinies. We've been playing these characters across lifetimes, not just hours or days or weeks. But it's also an exciting thought. This isn't the final chapter but the final stepping stone before we make the leap to *Assassin's Creed III* in 2012. Well, that's our guess anyway. We can't wait to be proven right.

● Each district has a very distinct feel. The Constantin district, for example, is made mostly of wood.





Q&A

REVEALING REVELATIONS



Creative director Alex Amancio talks about working on a popular series and how they plan to make Ezio go out with a bang

Play: *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* is a massive project, and it's been made in a very short time. What challenges has this presented to you during development and how have you overcome them?

Alex Amancio: At Montreal we have around 200 people working on the game. Our studio is the core team, experts on the franchise, and so we make sure we deal with all the difficult things that really slow down production. We know exactly where the franchise is heading, what we need to work on. We know what the features we need to implement are. Also, we're not alone. We have a total of six studios working on the project across the globe.

We have Quebec working on all of the exotic sequences [Play – such as the set pieces]. They've actually been doing these exotic mechanics from day one in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise. We have Singapore helping us do the linear gameplay sequences and also developing the Cappadocia city. Again, these guys have been making *Assassin's Creed* games since *Assassin's Creed II*. We have Annecy in France, they're dealing with the multiplayer as they have always done. We have Bucharest supporting Annecy, and we have Massive in Sweden that is taking care of Desmond's sections. Every studio has their own expertise, while Montreal is the lead studio overseeing production, co-ordinating all of the studios and making sure that everything like the main vision is not only respected but reinforced throughout the production. It is a challenge but we make sure we're hitting our targets and not straying from the initial instructions.

When *Revelations* was first announced a lot of gamers commented on the short space of time between this and *Brotherhood*. With all the spin-off games and the short release schedule, do you ever feel that you could be over-saturating the market with *Assassin's Creed*?

If you look at the big franchises like *Call Of Duty*, like clockwork every year they have their window and people enjoy it because they showed the consumers that yes, they have a game every year but they always deliver on time and with exceptional quality. So in that sense, we have the same approach. In essence, *Assassin's Creed* is a franchise that is rich in history and we have this really intriguing plot line-spanning millennia. We have stuff to say. If we feel that we don't have anything else to add then we just won't ship it.

But as it is, right now, Ezio's narrative structure is that of a trilogy which is one of the oldest narrative structures out there. It's the whole thing where he becomes the hero, he becomes the leader and then he attains this sort of epiphany and begins to understand everything and then completes the circle. You know, this is Ezio completing the circle and passing the torch. So by creating this narrative circle I think it makes the character and it makes the whole aim of the first two stronger. This is why the game is coming out.

Is one year too short? At Ubisoft we can deliver the game that we want in that time and so when it comes to the consumers, when they see that the quality is always there like clockwork, I think they will enjoy these chapters every year.

How well did you feel *Brotherhood's* assassin recruits were received? And in what capacity do they feature in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*?

In *AC: Brotherhood*, you actually recruited assassins and they could reach level 10, to make them True Assassins. We've added an additional five levels, which makes them basically Master Assassins. But before they can become Master Assassins they must undertake a sort of a rite of passage where they will come to see you and present you with a unique quest that they must take to become a Master. Ezio must then decide to move forward and help them on this three-tiered quest on their way to becoming a Master Assassin. It makes every assassin a lot more unique, it makes them a real person because they're not just a crowd of people. They have their own names, their own story, their own life.

Earlier today we saw a sequence where Ezio is about to be hung, but he escapes and falls down the side of a mountain, the game then proceeding into an action sequence. It's very set piece driven and instantly recalled *Uncharted*. Was that a touchstone when you were making *Revelations*?

Our influences are far more cinematic. The thing is, you mentioned *Uncharted* and I'm actually a big fan of *Uncharted* but it's a game that relies on set pieces, right? It's a game that is pretty much all set piece driven and realisation driven. What we tried to do with our game was integrate the realisation and the systemic together. What we want to do with that is have you go from systemic play to more linear, more focused play in the most seamless way possible. So if you're constantly jumping through key moments, you know like systemic elements, to then narrative elements, to sort of the more linear/staged sections seamlessly, you don't necessarily realise that's happening and are just having a great time, a great playing experience without interruption.

So that was the approach that we took. People will obviously mention *Uncharted* but our goal is sort of the more cinematic feeling rather than a specific game. But we want to push it even further, the example you mention is during one of the linear sequences. We're also planning the same kind of uses in the actual game, trying to avoid the cinematic/game, cinematic/game syndrome. We don't want people to feel like it's a cinematic, we want people to feel like they are playing the game and the game itself is the experience. Obviously, we know what the difference between a cinematic and in-game section is but hopefully, if we do our job correctly, the player won't see the difference any more. The lines will at least be blurred. The game should be telling the story, the cinematics shouldn't be telling the story.

MASS EFFECT



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Confirmed Squad

Ashley Williams >

A potential love interest for Shepard in *Mass Effect 1*, Williams can die during a mission on Virmire. If she survived then you will have met her on Horizon in *Mass Effect 2*. She was generally suspicious of aliens during *ME1* thanks to her military background, but dislikes Cerberus when you meet in *Mass Effect 2*.

Liara T'Soni >

Another of Shepard's love interests from the first game, she made a cameo appearance in *Mass Effect 2* and if you've played the *Shadow Broker* DLC mission then you'll know she has now assumed that Broker role. She also happens to be a very skilled Biotic.

Commander Shepard >

A decorated Alliance leader, the first human Spectre, saviour of the Citadel and the leader of the only team to successfully traverse the Omega Relay, Shepard is a legend by *Mass Effect 3*. But legends make enemies and now Shepard must bring the galaxy together to save Earth.

< James Vega

A brand-new character for *Mass Effect 3*, he is intended to be a link for new players of *Mass Effect* to catch up with the series. His surname was originally Sanders, but was changed, perhaps to avoid linking him with Kahlee Sanders, a major player in the *Mass Effect* novels.

< Kaidan Alenko

A gifted biotic, Kaidan was a potential love interest to female Shepard characters in *Mass Effect 1*, but can die during the Virmire mission. If he survived instead of Ashley Williams then he also takes her place on Horizon. He has no love of Cerberus and a troubled past.

< Garrus Vakarian

Assuming he survived your suicide mission at the end of *Mass Effect 2*, this would be Garrus's third consecutive appearance in your squad. He's an expert marksman specialising with a sniper rifle and also has some limited tech abilities such as Overload.

Returning Cast



David Anderson

Shepard's ex-commanding officer and potential chair of the Citadel Council, Anderson is an uneasy politician, but a dedicated soldier.



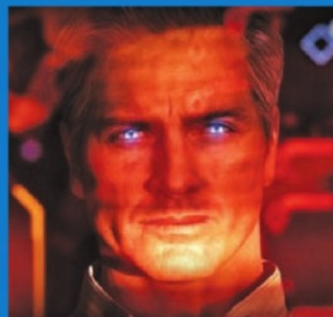
Donnel Udina

A politician with no love of Shepard, Udina could also be in the Citadel Council. An experienced diplomat but a dislikeable personality.



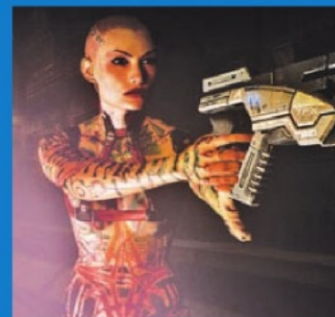
EDI

The Normandy AI has gained the trust of her crew by the end of *Mass Effect 2*, but can she gain the trust of the galaxy?



Illusive Man

Did you stick with Cerberus or show them the finger? How you left things with the Illusive Man could have a huge impact on events now.



Jack

Assuming she survived *ME2* with you, Jack's connections in the underworld could prove as useful as her biotic powers and ferocity.



Confirmed Planets



<Earth

This is a planet you should be familiar with. Third planet from the star Sol, home of the human race and seemingly the primary target of the impending Reaper invasion of the galaxy.



<Mars

With a wealth of Prothean ruins, Mars has seen limited development or terraforming in the hopes of preserving these historic finds. It could well still have secrets to uncover before this final battle.



<Rannoch

The former quarian homeworld, now the base of operations for the geth, none of the Council races have been there since the quarians went into exile. It will almost certainly play a major role now.



<Sur'Kesh

The salarian homeworld. As you go about your task of uniting the known galaxy to the cause of stopping the Reapers you will inevitably need to bring the brilliant soldiers and scientists here on board.



<Palaven

The home of the turians, it is also the birthplace of Garrus Vakarian. Palaven is a fairly inhospitable place thanks to large levels of radiation that are allowed through its atmosphere.



<Ilium

This world *Mass Effect 2* players will be familiar with and is most famous for its loose custom laws that allow research and trade in areas that would be considered illegal elsewhere in the galaxy.

The Big Questions

What will Cerberus do?

Cerberus is bigger, badder and better armed than ever before and after your head. You may have left things on good terms with the Illusive Man, but Cerberus won't stand idly by if Earth is under attack.

How will Liara's role as Shadow Broker affect her?

She took over from the Shadow Broker in a DLC mission giving her virtually limitless access to a galaxy of information. These secrets could be used as a form of persuasion.

Will the geth and quarians go to war?

You had a choice during Tali's loyalty mission to offer your opinion on the quarians going after their homeworld. Did you encourage war, fight for peace or say nothing? Any response could have massive repercussions.

Will the rachni get involved?

The interactive comic gave you the choice to save or destroy the rachni Queen. She could still get involved in *Mass Effect 3*.

Will the geth fight against the Reapers?

Did you brainwash or kill the heretic geth? That decision could come back to haunt you.

Will there be multiplayer?

BioWare says no but we wouldn't rule it out.

Will Shepard punch a journalist?

Does the Pope do his thing in the woods?

How many endings will it have?

No sequel after this means no limit to the number of endings BioWare can offer.

Major Improvements



Combat

Challenge is the new watchword of *Mass Effect's* combat as 'Normal' difficulty will be much tougher than before. This is in part thanks to improved AI with different enemy types working together to outfox you. You should also find yourself using your melee attacks more often with unique heavy attacks unlockable for each character class. You should move around faster too thanks to new rolling and jumping moves.



Powers

Your special tech and biotic abilities will be greatly enhanced in this final game for Shepard with BioWare promising much larger skill trees. You'll have the opportunity to evolve your powers multiple times during the game, becoming a true specialist in your respective class. This is thanks to the fact that with no game to follow for Shepard BioWare doesn't need to worry about carrying over your abilities.



Vehicles

While specific vehicles have yet to be confirmed it seems clear that you will remain on the Normandy at the very least and that some form of planet exploration will be included. The *Project Overlord* DLC was described at the time to be an attempt to resolve the issues some people had with exploration of planets in the original *Mass Effect*, so more of that kind of thing seems likely. Mining may return, but probably in a new form.



Jeff 'Joker' Moreau

The Normandy's pilot, Joker has been through it all with Shepard. His experience and trust may prove essential once again.



Legion

Having revealed how divided the geth are, Legion may be vital in recruiting his people to the cause of stopping the Reapers.



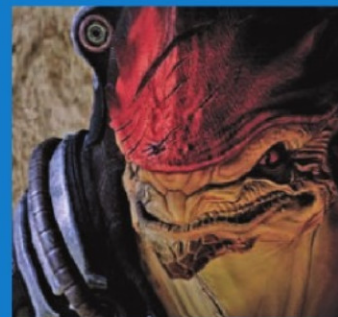
Mordin Solus

As a respected scientist, Mordin will likely have contacts in the salarian government, but will his work on the genophage be an issue?



Tali'Zorah nar Rayya

The role of the quarians could be crucial and if you saved her from exile and death in *ME2*, Tali will have a huge role to play.



Urdrnot Wrex

A massive fan favourite, you'll have met him as the leader of Clan Urdrnot on Tuchanka where he was uniting the krogan. A powerful ally.

HARDEST GAMES



"GAMES ARE GETTING EASIER!" THEY BLEAT. "SHUT UP!" WE RETORT. THEN WE PROVIDE A HANDY LIST TO SHOW YOU WHAT THE HARDEST GAMES ON PS3 ARE, JUST TO HAMMER HOME OUR UNARGUABLE FACT-BASED OPINION

25

Dragon Age: Origins

Publisher: EA • Released: Nov 2009 • Price: £44.99

This would be a game of tactical nuance – one where you guided your little crew of fantasy warriors carefully around the battlefield, issuing specific commands and watching your efforts rewarded with delicious, juicy victories. It would be that, but it isn't. Instead it's just difficult to do anything properly, and it's all down to playing the game with a pad. Mouse and keyboard on PC had no such problems, and the issues were such that BioWare changed things for *Dragon Age II*.

If you can do it, you are: playing on PC.

PLAYSTATION'S HARDEST GAMES

18209

24 Critter Crunch

• Publisher: Cappybara

• Released: Nov 2009 • Price: £4.49

WE'RE EARLY ON early on in this here list and it could be argued that *Critter Crunch* isn't all that hard. Well, we disagree. While the main game gets pretty difficult later on, it's the puzzle levels that can induce absolute brainlock of an epic scale. It's beautiful and CHARMING, true, but *Critter Crunch* is also a sadist of the highest order when it wants to ramp things up a bit. Still, Biggs (not 360 magazine's Ben) is cute.

If you can do it, you are: quite good at games, we suppose.



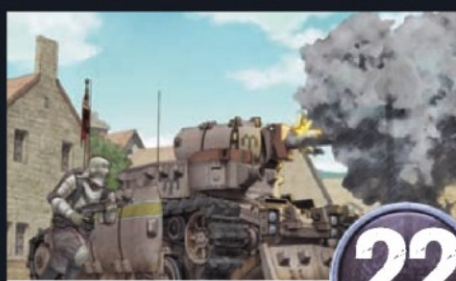
23 Disgaea 3

• Publisher: Square Enix

• Released: Feb 2009 • Price: £44.99

AS A SERIES *Disgaea* has always been one of massive, ridiculous difficulty spikes that require you to go back and grind for a few hours before you're good enough to take on the level. But it's always been in Item World where the real challenge comes in, making the game far more like banging your head against a brick wall than a game of anything even slightly resembling 'fairness' or 'ease'. We know people who've lost hundreds of hours to it.

If you can do it, you are: a more patient person than most of us.



22 Valkyria Chronicles

• Publisher: Sega • Released: Oct 2008

• Price: £49.99

ON DISCUSSING THE difficulty of Sega's fine strategy game we were met with the claim of: "if you know what you're doing it's easy". In the parlance of our times: WAT? Of course it's easy if you know what you're doing. You tend not to know immediately what to do when you're playing for the first time, though, and *Valkyria Chronicles* will regularly pimp-slap you for stepping slightly out of line. And we love it for that.

If you can do it, you are: taking turns to the top.



21 Tekken 6

• Publisher: Namco

• Released: Oct 2009 • Price: £49.99

YOU WILL HAVE your fights against the AI that might annoy you a little bit, and you will also have your fights against human opponents that will just be silly-hard to overcome. But none of that means anything – none of it measures up to the sheer hair-ripping fury that comes after you have lost for the 50th time in a row to the cheapest – the absolute cheapest – character that has ever graced a fighting game. And that even includes Eddy Gordo.

If you can do it, you are: less of a \$%#.



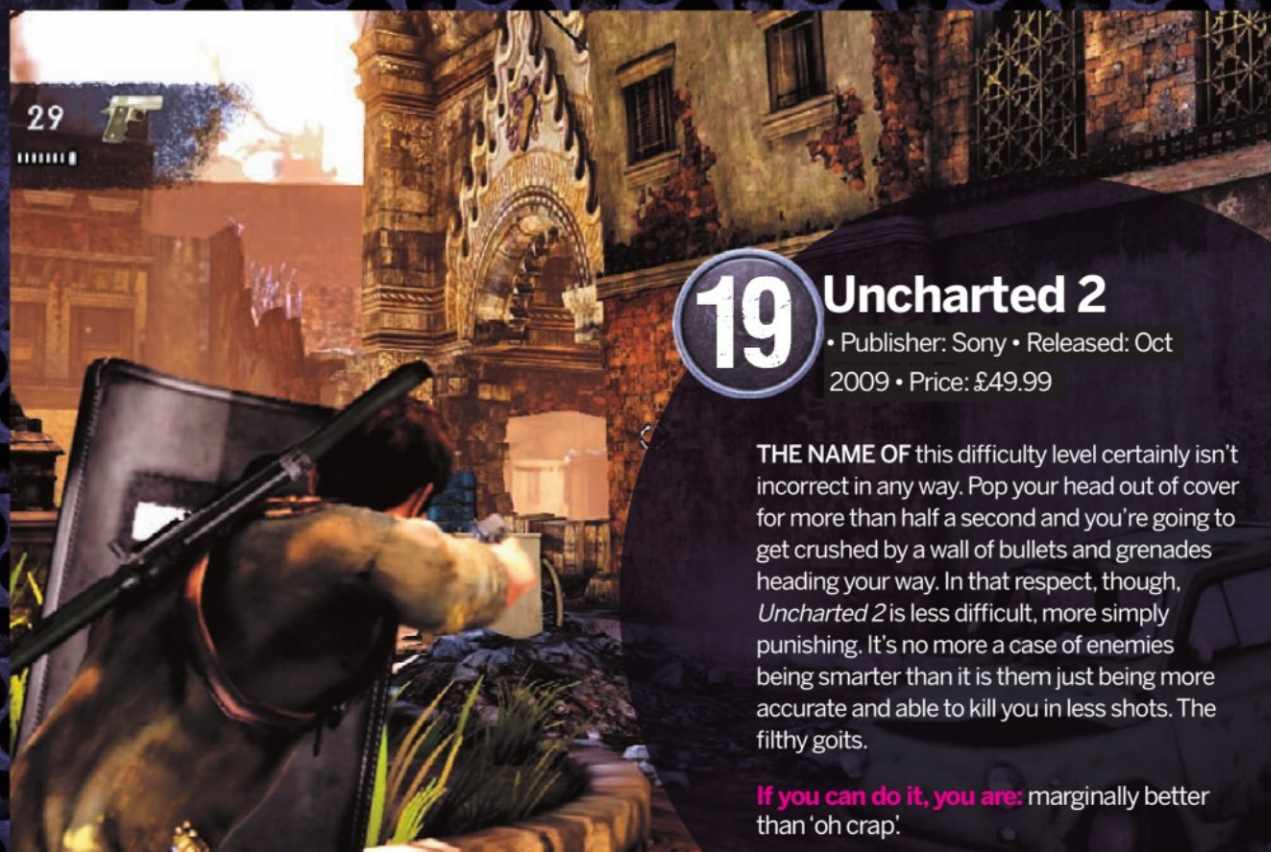
20 Shank

• Publisher: EA

• Released: Aug 2010 • Price: £11.99

It definitely suits the whole *Shank* package that the game is thoroughly solid. Not stupidly hard, rarely a true challenge that can't be overcome with numerous retries, but nonetheless a difficult experience. Why? Well, unblockable attacks make up a part of it, as do the waves of enemies trying to take out our knifey-shotgunny hero. It's not that much of a push to say that sometimes (alright then, a bit more than sometimes) *Shank* feels a little bit cheap.

If you can do it, you are: not going to get shanked in the shower.

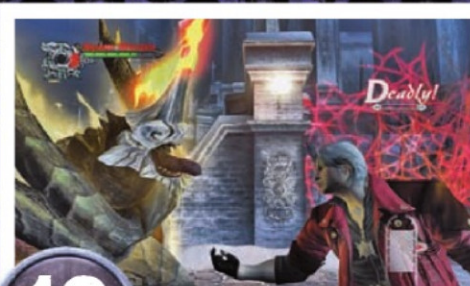


19 Uncharted 2

• Publisher: Sony • Released: Oct 2009 • Price: £49.99

THE NAME OF this difficulty level certainly isn't incorrect in any way. Pop your head out of cover for more than half a second and you're going to get crushed by a wall of bullets and grenades heading your way. In that respect, though, *Uncharted 2* is less difficult, more simply punishing. It's no more a case of enemies being smarter than it is them just being more accurate and able to kill you in less shots. The filthy goits.

If you can do it, you are: marginally better than 'oh crap'.



18 Devil May Cry 4

• Publisher: Capcom
• Released: Feb 2008 • Price: £49.99

IF THIS LIST included PS2 games, *DMC 4* wouldn't be here. It would be *DMC 3* instead, and it would be much higher. All the same, even though *DMC 4* isn't as hard as its precursor it's enough of a git to warrant an entry. What's that? You want it to let you off the hook so you can recuperate? Nah, not going to happen.

If you can do it, you are: still not good enough to do *DMC 3*.



17 Portal 2

• Publisher: EA

• Released: April 2011 • Price: £49.99

MUCH AS WE want to, it'd be difficult to put *Portal 2* any higher in this list. It's hard, but it's difficulty that is almost entirely overcome with logic and planning, without a great deal of skill involved. As such, it's not exactly comparable to the hardtitude of some games later in this list. Having said that, there are puzzles that will stop your brain in its tracks. That's as in your brain will just stop. Pop. Finished. Done.

If you can do it, you are: shooting for the Moon.



16 Super Stardust

• Publisher: Sony • Released: Jun 2007

• Price: £4.99

A SIMPLE, TWIN-STICK shooter you may think. Well yes – that's how it all starts out. That's how it lures you into a false sense of security. Then it gets a bit more intense. Then a bit more intense. Then a bit more. Then... you get the idea. It will take many attempts to finish each level, and even more attempts to finish them with any kind of dignity. Still, it looks spiffy in 3D.

If you can do it, you are: a better bet than Bruce Willis in *Armageddon*.



15 MotorStorm

• Publisher: Sony

• Released: Mar 2007 • Price: £49.99

THE ARRIVAL OF *MotorStorm* came alongside the arrival of the PS3 itself. We were hopeful for a new, special future where things would be different. The world would change. We didn't expect to be dropped into a world of quite obnoxiously unforgiving racing, where one simple mistake sees you right at the back of the pack. It's certainly not impossible, and clever use of boosting – along with tenacity – will get you through. But if you make that one mistake on the final corner...

If you can do it, you are: better at boosting than we are.

14 Super Street Fighter IV

• Publisher: Capcom

• Released: Apr 2010 • Price: £29.99

NOW THIS ONE isn't out and out difficult, generally speaking. True, the final battle is against a twerp who everybody hates, but single-player isn't *that* bad. It's online where things get a bit special; when you realise not only are you not very good at *SSFIV*, but that you're probably no good at any games ever released and should probably quit in order to preserve what little pride you have left. Note this is all reliant on you *not* being *Play* editor Ryan King.

If you can do it, you are: Ryan King.

13 Wipeout HD

• Publisher: Sony • Released: Sep 2008

• Price: £11.99

THE ORIGINAL WIPEOUT was notoriously difficult, punishing players for the slightest mistakes and providing our younger selves with many hours of 'being irritated'. While becoming easier, it's still a jolt to go to *Wipeout HD* and find it's a lot less friendly than most other modern racers. It's not as unforgiving as the first in the series, but it still doesn't let you off the hook very lightly.

If you can do it, you are: (Not) wiped out.

12 Killzone 2

• Publisher: Sony
• Released: Feb 2009 • Price: £49.99

IT WOULD BE dumb of us to include COD in this list and not give a mention to *Killzone 2*, which manages to conjure up similar feelings when played on elite. Namely the panic as you realise you're once again facing overwhelming, unrelenting odds, super-accurate red-eyed buggers who never seem to stop until you are dead. Which you will be. Because you will die a lot. A lot. The Visari Palace section? Yeah. That. Crikey. **If you can do it, you are:** a bit of a show-off, frankly.

11 Dead Rising 2

• Publisher: Capcom
• Released: Sep 2010 • Price: £49.99

IT'S ENDLESSLY JARRING playing through *Dead Rising 2*. One second you're wading – sometimes literally – through legions of the undead, cleaving limbs and faces left and right and enjoying every second of it. The next you're facing off against a postman who kills you in two hits. Then you realise you didn't save for an age because it slipped your mind, because you were too busy enjoying playing the game to take time out and go to the toilet. Thanks, *Dead Rising 2*.

If you can do it, you are: wearing a moose head.

10 Catherine

• Publisher: Atlus • Released: Feb 2011 • Price: £59.99

WE HAD TO co-opt our Man In Japan (who isn't in Japan any more) to handle the *Catherine* review, mainly because we wouldn't have understood what was going on. Turns out we could have understood one thing, even without knowing any Japanese: it's really quite annoyingly hard. The main problem with this is it's hard more through bad design than anything else, making it the absolute worst kind of hard. Maybe it was just lost in translation, though... or not.

If you can do it, you are: probably dreaming.

09 The PixelJunk series

• Publisher: Sony • Released: Sept 2007
• Price: £5.99

ALL OF THE *PixelJunk* releases have been difficult enough to warrant both a mention of it in their reviews and for us to shout expletives at the screen as we die/lose again because it's so bloody hard. When it gets to the point where two games in the series – *Monsters* and *Eden* – have to be patched in order to make them less challenging for those of a lower skill level, you know there's some frustrating times to be had.

If you can do it, you are: probably using the easy patch. Cheat.

08 Vanquish

• Publisher: Sega • Released: Oct 2010
• Price: £49.99

ONE OF TWO Platinum entries to the top ten, it comes as no surprise that *Vanquish* offers up a solid challenge at the standard difficulty setting. But God Hard is something else entirely. When a difficulty level has been named after one of the PlayStation 2's hardest games – *God Hand* – you know the developers aren't making empty claims. It's only about five hours long, but on God Hard difficulty *Vanquish* will likely take a few dozen (and a few thousand deaths).

If you can do it, you are: godly with your hands.

07 Call Of Duty series

• Publisher: Activision
• Released: Mar 2007 • Price: £49.99

FOR A MASS market game aimed at the lowest common denominator, the *Call Of Duty* series has never been afraid to tear chunks out of the players who dare to knock it up to Veteran. Everyone who has played at this difficulty level will have their stories – the lack of progress, the respawning enemies, the hundreds of grenades thrown at you over the course of a minute. We'd guess it's almost as bad as being in a real war. Maybe.

If you can do it, you are: deserving a Medal Of Hono[u]r



06

Bayonetta

• Publisher: Sega • Released: Jan 2010 • Price: £49.99

EVEN ON THE standard difficulty level Platinum's adventures of a Sarah Palin lookalike are hard enough to make steam literally come out of your ears*. It's no surprise, therefore, that cranking things up to the hardest level makes *Bayonetta* an intensely difficult gaming experience, sure to flummox all but the most dextrous of finger acrobats.

While it is hard, though, *Bayonetta* also falls in with the small group of games that reward skilful players by being fair to them. Which is nice. *Not literally.

If you can do it, you are: perverted, and not in the way *Bayonetta* encourages.



05

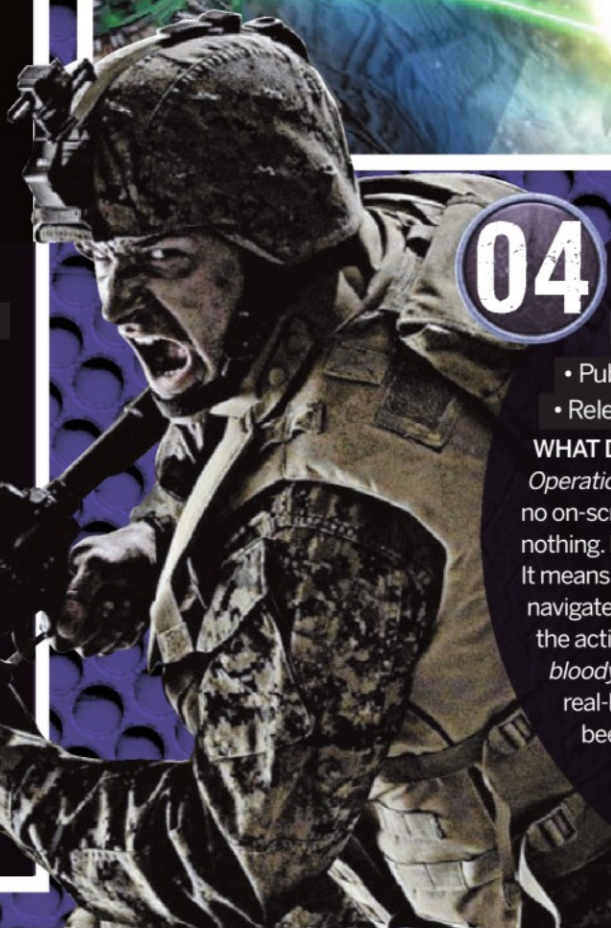
Savage Moon (especially the DLC)

• Publisher: Sony

• Released: Dec 2008 • Price: £6.99

THE ORIGINAL SAVAGE *Moon* was hard – very hard at points. A great little tower defence game, too, but more than anything it was hard. Not impossible, though. Step in Mr DLC, in the shape of the *Waldgeist* add-on, and enter stage-left its new apprentice in the shape of Captain Impossible. It's not something we're happy to admit, but nobody on the **Play** team has ever finished a *Savage Moon* game. And that's not for want of trying.

If you can do it, you are: better than **Play** at videogames.



04

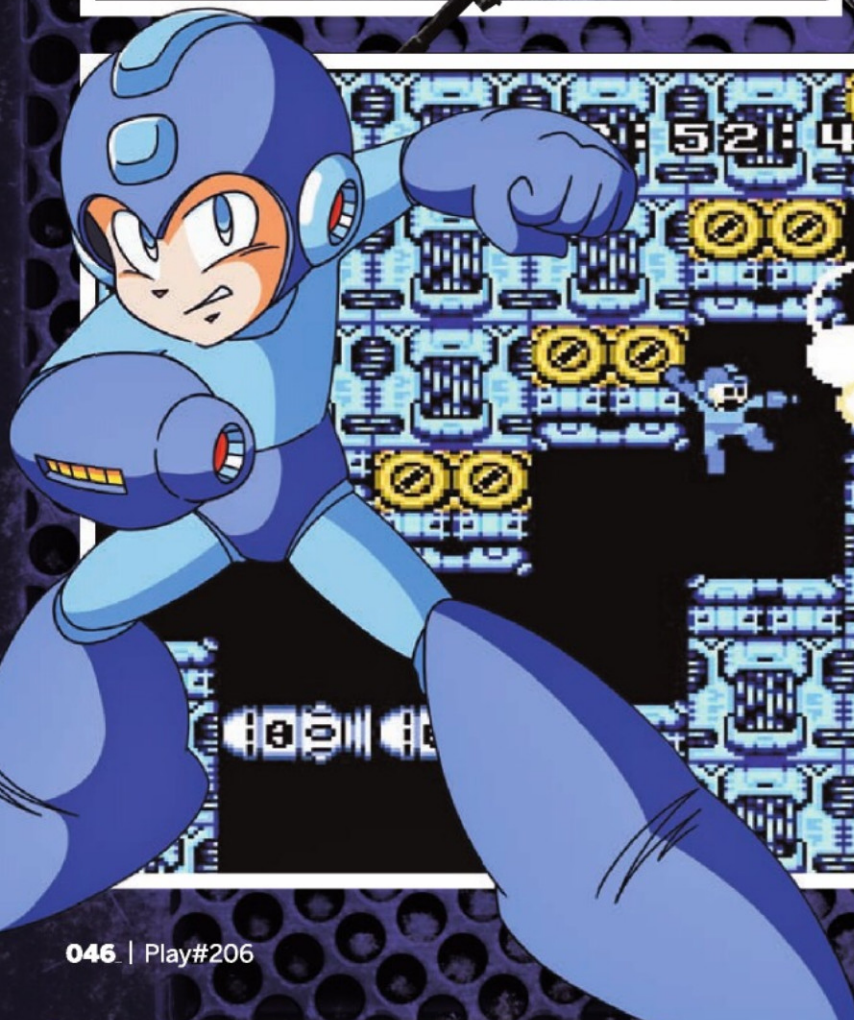
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising

• Publisher: Codemasters

• Released: Oct 2009 • Price: £49.99

WHAT DOES 'HARDCORE' mean to you? To *Operation Flashpoint*, it means no crosshairs, no on-screen prompts, no ammo counters – no nothing. It means you'll die if you get shot, generally. It means you have to actually look at your map to navigate, and looking at your map doesn't pause the action. What it means, in short, is that it's *really bloody hardcore*. It's not quite on a par with a real-life war, though, at least not as far as we've been led to believe.

If you can do it, you are: frightening, and possibly mental.



03

Mega Man 9 + 10

• Publisher: Capcom • Released: Sep '08 & Mar '10

• Price: £6.99

SURELY GAMES WEREN'T this difficult when we were young? Surely there's been a mistake made in the memory of every single person who has ever lived? We were kids back then (or just 'younger than we are right now' in the case of certain people) – how could we possibly have the skills to conquer the world of Mega Man if it was as hard as numbers 9 and 10?

Capcom made a big thing of its return to the series, informing us that not only would the Mega men look the part, but that they'd punish us for getting complacent in our old age. We've been babysat by modern gaming, apparently, and according to Capcom the antidote to this is to release two games that border on impossible. But hey, they claim it's historically accurate, so who are we to complain?

If you can do it, you are: probably quite old, definitely insane.

02

Ninja Gaiden Sigma/2

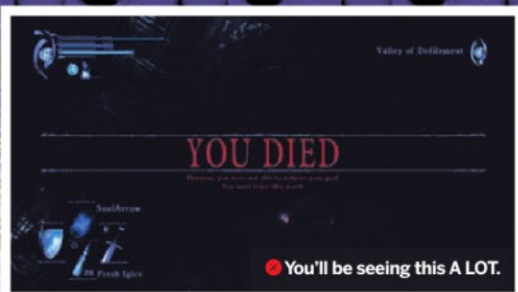
• Publisher: Tecmo Koei

• Released: Jul '07 & Oct '09 • Price: £49.99

BEING A SUPER-NINJA from the future, capable of slicing up everyone in your path while bouncing about like Tigger at the peak of a sugar rush might make you think you're hard. You can cope. You can take on all-comers. You're not, and you can't. And the *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* series repeatedly reminds us of this simple fact.

There's a fine balance the game strikes between inducing fits of pad-throwing rage as seemingly insurmountable odds overwhelm the player, and encouraging the very same player to give it one more go. It almost says to you 'go on – try again, this time you can do it'. It's lying, mind. And it will feel like it's cheating you out of a lot of progress. But you will keep going back, you'll teach yourself new techniques and eventually – *eventually* – you might just overcome the obstacle. It's more likely you'll quit in disgust, though.

If you can do it, you are: a tenacious masochist.



01

Demon's Souls

• Publisher: Namco Bandai

• Released: June 2010 • Price: £34.99

WE'VE HARPED ON and on about how difficult *Demon's Souls* is for well over a year now, so it's hardly surprising to see that it's finished up on top of DIFFICULTY HILL, as we're not calling it. It's a complete bastard of a game, punishing even the slightest transgression with a terribly painful death at the hands of what you would assume to be a rather innocuous grunt-shaped enemy.

Soon enough you find yourself adapting – mainly by never letting your shield down and edging your way around every level. And that's when you realise it's done it: *Demon's Souls* has scared you into submission. It makes you its bitch. And nobody can get through the game without accepting that fact.

The strange thing is that, while *Demon's Souls* is exceptionally difficult, it always feels fair. You never feel cheated, or like the game has artificially ramped things up just to kill you one more time. There's a constant logic and ruleset established and the game never deviates from this path. What this means is that aside from getting your backside handed to you on a platter (repeatedly), if you take your time and respect the laws created by the world, you won't be punished as much. All the same, it's still made you its little plaything.

The problem is, you're only human – meaning you will make mistakes. And mistakes aren't tolerated in the world of *Demon's Souls*. You will die – over and over again – and it will always be your own stupid fault.

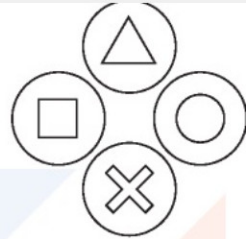
If you can do it, you are: almost Chuck Norris.



IN THE BLUE CORNER

Uncharted 2 – The Previous Contender

A glut of competitive modes are supplemented by Gold Rush, a co-op mode where up to three players work together to grab treasure, and Siege, where players need to defend an area against waves of foes. The inclusion of these co-op modes helped Uncharted 2 stand out from its rival.



UNCHARTED 3 MULTIPLAYER WILL TOPPLE BLACK OPS

✦ It has 3D multiplayer

Uncharted 3's really going to town with the full-on 3D stereoscopic support, so you'll be able to light up your enemies while wearing funny glasses to your heart's content. We all know *Uncharted 3*'s going to look 'da bomb' as the kids say, but 3D multiplayer's going to kick bottom. Sliding down a zip line while emptying your load (bullets, people...) into an opponent's distant face will never feel as sweet.

✦ Team vs team vs team

In *Black Ops*' team deathmatch, it's you and your buddies against another group set on filling you with lead. Standard fare. In *Uncharted 3*, though, you'll have to worry about a third team coming your way, adding some potential for temporary alliances should one side go too far out in front. A great deal of potential for some truly interesting finales to matches as teams flip-flop between who their primary targets are.

✦ Maps keep changing

In *Uncharted 3*'s multiplayer, not every map will be a big rectangle, lots of scenery, killing etc affair. Some of the maps will be two big rectangles, with double the scenery and so on. Take the map where a plane is prepping itself for take-off. After battling around it for a while, the action switches to a hangar, with all sorts of different tactical options to consider. 'Don't get too comfy' is the moral here. Things could change up at any moment.

✦ Multiplayer set pieces

The *Uncharted* series is all about its set pieces, spectacularly exciting moments that thrilled anyone but the most cynical. The third iteration's multiplayer aims to make sure its multiplayer has these moments, too, so expect to see the likes of fighter planes making deadly strafing runs through the middle of the map. You might get air strikes and the like in *Black Ops*, but nothing with this level of visual bang.

✦ More customisation

It's arguably true that the *Call Of Duty* series was the pioneer for unlocks and levelling up in competitive online games. *Uncharted 3*'s running with this idea and allowing a whole new level of customisation on top of all that, like the ability to customise not just your weapons, but your outfit, too, plus you can create your own Emblem, a visual tag that'll appear on your character but also can sometimes be spotted in the environment.

✦ New 'Power Plays'

One of the worst things about playing online is when you feel you're trying your best and doing quite well, but then you look at the team scoreboard and you realise you've got no chance of winning because the rest of your team's hopeless. *Uncharted 3* may well have you covered with its Power Plays, activated when one team is a long way back in a match. The losing side now gets a stream of bonuses that try to make it an even affair once again, while the team in the lead can maximise their cash for the match during this period. Everyone's a winner.

✦ Better Cinema mode

As far as community features go, Cinema mode's something to keep an eye on. It allows you to create clips from footage of full matches and then upload them directly to YouTube or Facebook from your PS3. If you happen to create something truly unique or of interest to the community at large, it might even be selected for publication on the main multiplayer menu in everybody's game. So if you see anything extraordinary happen, you know what you have to do.

✦ Proper co-op

Co-op counts as multiplayer, too, and it's definitely going in *Uncharted 3*. *Black Ops* really dropped the ball with its lack of a Spec Ops mode, which

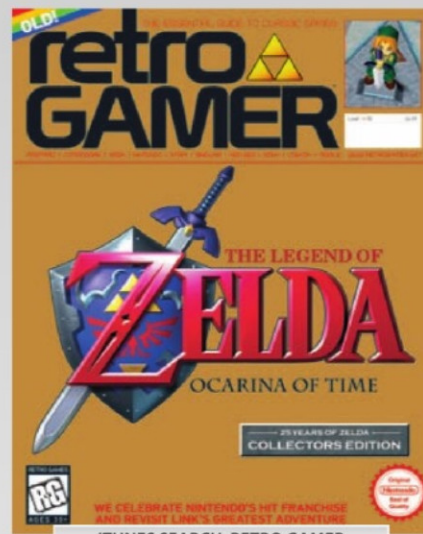
was a fantastic feature of its predecessor *Modern Warfare 2*. Naughty Dog isn't making that mistake, giving us friendly souls the chance to get our help on in a confirmed-but-as-yet-sketchy co-op mode. Competitive multiplayer's looking tighter than William Shatner's corset, so we've got high hopes for some quality surprises from the co-op side of things.



IN THE RED CORNER
Black Ops – The Current Champ
Black Ops is the go-to game for multiplayer man-kill enthusiasts. There's a lot to do and loads of levels to play through. Sadly, it lacks a Spec Ops-like co-op mode, but it does feature Zombies again. Just not enough of them.



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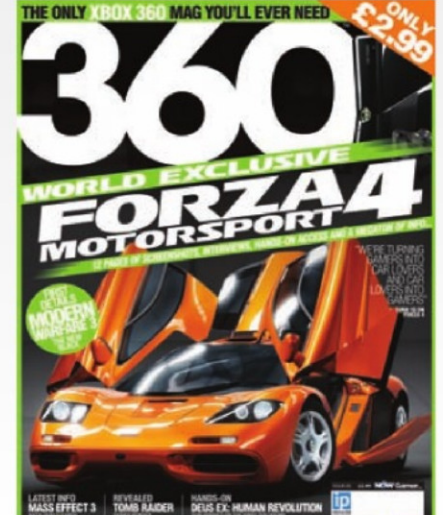
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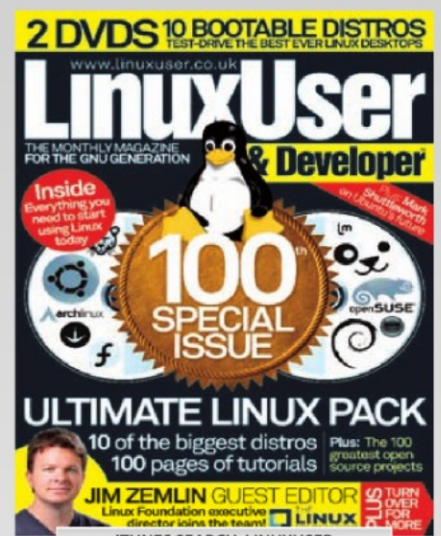
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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



● *Skyrim's* new engine, the Creation Engine, is absolutely stunning.

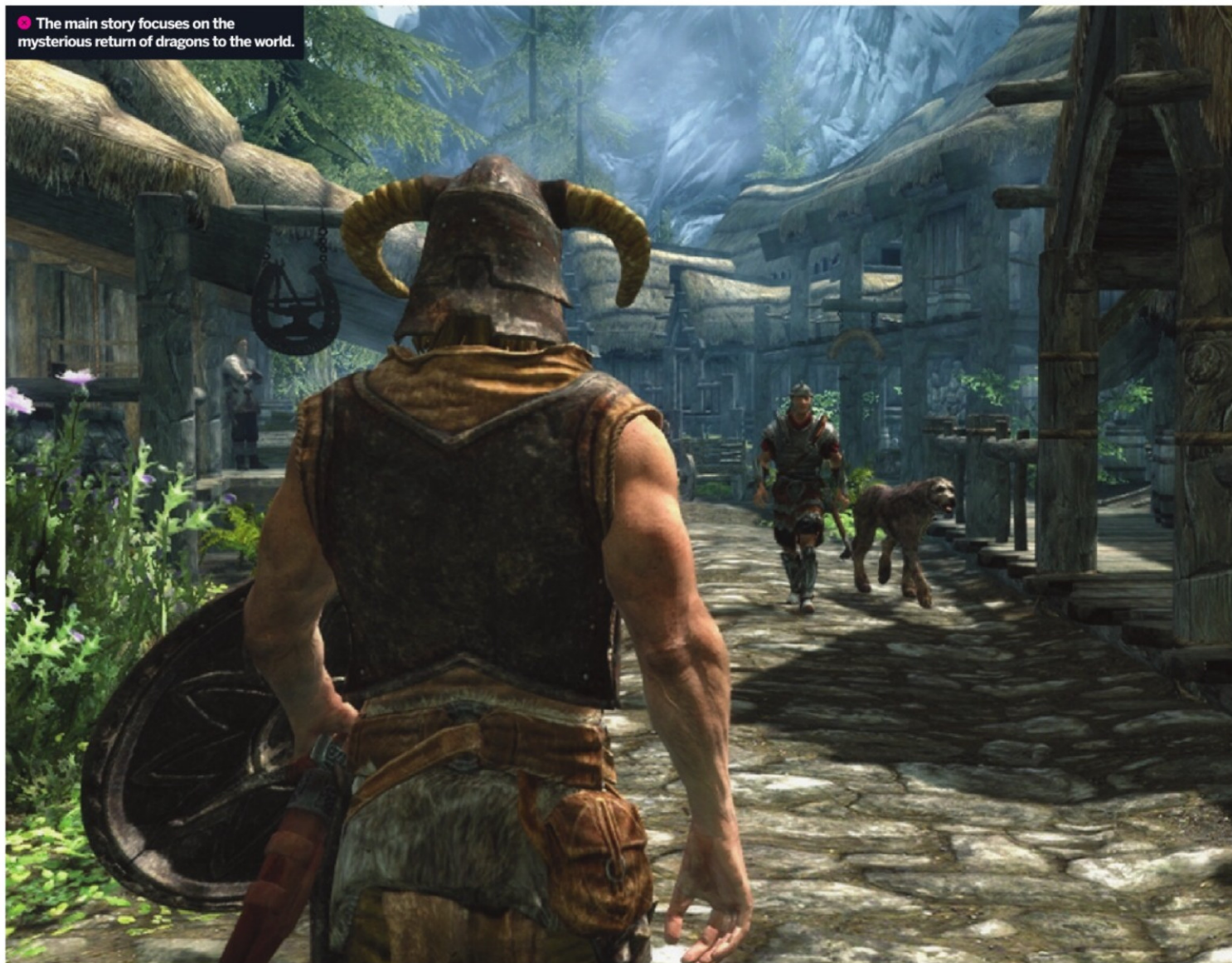
SPEECH THERAPY

What big name actors can we expect in *Skyrim*?

"**WE'VE EXPANDED VOICEOVERS** a lot from the *Oblivion* template," says Todd Howard, game director. "We progressed a lot from *Oblivion* to *Fallout* and this is an even bigger jump in the amount of people we have. We've been really lucky with actors as we can say, 'Liam Neeson would be a perfect father. What are the chances?' and he said yes. Videogaming overall has reached this level of mass-consciousness and for a lot of these actors there's a cool factor to doing a videogame. It's not about money. It's about this stuff being good art, it looks cool, and my agent is telling me it's going to be good for me. A lot more people are doing it and they come to us. We have Max von Sydow but he's not the only one. As for who else, they're coming. Maybe Charlie Sheen [laughs]. Tiger blood!"



● The main story focuses on the mysterious return of dragons to the world.





RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

In the northern regions of Tamriel the world is about to change



Bethesda's not a company concerned with the impossible. Every game it releases feels bigger and better than the last, cramming more ideas and concepts into each experience with a seemingly limitless capacity for imagination and a talent with technology that most developers can only dream of. It doesn't make games – it makes worlds that transport us into worlds new and ripe for exploration. It put the adventure back into Adventure. And now it's done it again.

We thought it impossible to ever feel the same sense of wonder and freedom we first felt when emerging from the lightless, dank catacombs of Cyrodiil's Imperial Palace onto a shimmering field of green in *Oblivion*. But Bethesda has managed to do it again. *Skyrim* – the fifth entry into the *Elder Scrolls* series – feels nothing less like a blast of clean, fresh air in the action-RPG genre.

Development on *Skyrim* began right after *Oblivion* in 2006, and the five years of work are immediately evident in the demo we're shown. Standing atop a mountain in *Skyrim* – the northernmost province of Tamriel – we gaze out upon a world that echoes *Oblivion*'s Cyrodiil, but is far more rugged, pocked with canyons and valleys and mountains that soar into the grey-white skies – the tallest, The Throat Of The World, scraping at the very heavens. And yet turn your attention to things closer and you'll see that the detail scales to the minute – grass sways lazily in the breeze; flowers are dappled by light and floating

butterflies. It's stunningly attractive: a game world as good-looking as any we've seen.

But let's backtrack a little, to the demo's opening. It doesn't begin on a mountainside but with your character being dragged to his death. He's the last Dovahkiin – a Dragonborn, tasked with fending off the threat the fire-breathing creatures impose on *Skyrim*. Don't expect much more back story than that, though. Bethesda wants players to make him their own. "Dragonborn means you were born with the soul of a dragon," says game director Todd Howard. "We intentionally don't give him a back story. In *Elder Scrolls* games you start in prison. So we set it up that you've come over the border into *Skyrim* and the Imperials have locked you up. We don't say why."

You'll interact with characters you have never seen before and be led to dungeons that you haven't visited previously

Bethesda's staying tight-lipped on other things too, like how you escape your imminent execution, with the demo cutting past it and starting up again high on a mountain path that winds down into the small town of Riverwood. Riverwood is small and earthy, breathed to life with NPCs chopping wood, repairing weapons, and toiling away in lumber mills. According to Bethesda everything you see an NPC doing you can do also. Or, if you so wish, you could sabotage the lumber mill, taking wood out of the economy and causing such knock-on effects as making arrows harder to come by. Eat your heart out, *Fable*.

We soon gain knowledge of the quest that forms the centrepiece of the demo. A shopkeeper, Lucan, has been robbed of a golden dragon claw ornament – seemingly of some sentimental value – and it's your job to retrieve it for him.

Quests in *Skyrim* won't necessarily play out the same way every time, the new Radiant Story System allowing Bethesda to customise quests based on your personal experience. "We want to tell really good stories but we can add elements into those quests that are 'Radiant,' or random," says Howard. "Here's an example: you go into a town, and in *Oblivion* or *Fallout* your typical quest is you meet a guy and his kid needs saving from a dungeon. It's all very static. We know the guy. We know the kid. We know the dungeon. In *Skyrim*, when the designer writes it they write all the dialogue but then fill out the parameters. So who was taken? We can say it was this specific character or we can

say it's a child of someone in the town. So the engine will look for the town, find a child, and send the child to a dungeon nearby that you haven't been to yet. Even with this quest we've shown, if Lucan dies for some reason, the system has a tag where his sister will become the quest giver and start running the store."

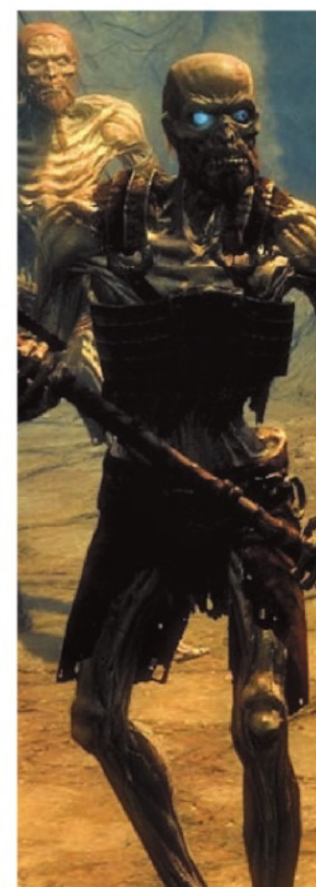
What this means is that in *Skyrim* you will be interacting with characters you have never seen before and be led to dungeons that you haven't visited previously. Todd Howard and his colleagues have written the game's story, but the Radiant Story System will figure out the logistics.



PREVIEW



Animation is now far more convincing, particularly in third-person mode.



This time, however, Lucan isn't dead and remains in charge of the store, and we discuss the robbery and the loss of his dragon claw. There's no persuasion wheel this time – you simply choose responses from a list with a speech skill governing what you can and cannot say. Thankfully you don't simply lock eyes with your conversation partner while the world pauses in the background; you're free to examine the shop as the conversation progresses.

Lucan's sister Camilla leads us to a mountain trail, and before we forge on we take the time to familiarise ourselves with *Skyrim*'s new UI. There are no spreadsheets or clutter, just a stylish, transparent in-game overlay. Access your inventory and a simple panel slides into the right-most third of the screen, with extra panels sliding across with each selection made. You can also examine collected items in 3D – something that will become important later on.

The map system is similarly improved, zooming the camera out to display a 3D representation of *Skyrim* that's incredibly detailed and easy to navigate. More impressive is when *Skyrim* turns its attention to the stars. Select Skills and the camera swoops upwards, displaying perk trees as iridescent constellations, the lines your routes of progression between specialisms and the stars themselves the different variations you can unlock. "With the skill tree I wanted to get away from Excel-like spreadsheets," says Howard. "I had this idea that if you look over your right shoulder you'd see weapons, to the left magic, and then look to the stars to see who you are. The previous *Elder Scrolls* games have always had birth signs and we really liked all that stuff, so it all came together."

So, feeling ready and equipped we begin our mountainside ascent to Break Falls Barrows – an ancient Nordic temple where our quest is to take place. As we do so snow begins to fall – slow at first, but soon thick and heavy. We pass structures that have a real sense of place in the world, and feel far more varied than the white stone of *Oblivion*'s Ayleid Ruins. Further up the mountain a giant crosses our path, three times our size and each footstep shaking the screen – but he ignores our presence. He'll only start a fight if provoked; just one of the ways Bethesda is making it feel like you inhabit a real world.

One creature does attack without provocation, though. We reach Break Falls Barrow to find a dragon perched

menacingly on top. Immediately alerted to our presence the beast swoops down towards us – but as our character is not yet equipped to do battle with such a creature he quickly runs into the safety and darkness of the temple's entrance.

Inside we are introduced to Draugrs – skeletal warriors from ages past who are protecting the temple ahead. Combat isn't too much removed from that in *Oblivion* – the left and right triggers control what's in each hand, which in this case means a bash attack from the shield or a heave of the sword. Not unlike *BioShock* you can mix and match what you wield in each hand, including spells. So, you could use a mace in one hand and a fire spell in the other, or use a healing spell in one and in the other an ice spell. And yes, you can even dual wield staffs, making you harder than Saruman in *Fellowship Of The Rings*.

We find the thief of the dragon claw at the bottom of a flight of wooden stairs – his name is Arvel The Swift, and

With *Oblivion*, Bethesda made adventuring feel exciting again. With *Skyrim*, we can already see that it's going to feel epic

he's caught on a spider web and guarded by a ferocious and oversized arachnid. We despatch of the best quickly and cut Arvel from the thick strings. Being the cheeky bugger he is he attempts to flee, but an arrow to the back soon stops him.

Now in possession of the dragon's claw we must use it to unlock a door – but using it as a key has no effect. Remember how we said examining items was important? Rotating the dragon's claw reveals runic inscriptions on its base, which we use to match three blocks alongside the locked entrance.

Through the door and down yet another staircase and we emerge into a strikingly beautiful cavern, cut

through with shafts of light that illuminate the glistening waterfalls and pools surrounding a central altar. This is a 'Word Wall', and as a Dragonborn the main character can use it to learn and command powerful spells known as Shouts – words spoken in the ancient dragon tongue. "There's about two dozen in the game, though there are three words for each of these so there are 60 plus words to collect," says Howard. The Shout discovered here allows us to slow down time, and as such bestows upon us the ability to deal with that pesky dragon we scarpered from earlier.

Emerging back into the crisp air and white mountains of *Skyrim*, the dragon descends upon us, attacking with its own Shouts – breathing fire being a form of speaking for dragons. Our ability to slow time gives us the edge, however, and after dodging its attacks and landing some heavy blows the ferocious creature dies. Its carcass bursts into flames, allowing the Dragonborn to absorb its soul – although Howard is yet to reveal exactly what effect this will have on your character.

In fact there's a lot we don't know about *Skyrim*. There's been no decision made on mounts or difficulty levels, we don't know if the game will include guilds, alchemy, or any number of other features also included in

Oblivion. We don't know why the dragons have returned to Tamriel, or just how significant a threat they pose. We don't know just how extensive the world is, or what awaits us at the summit of The Throat Of The World.

But what we do know, just from this incredibly small glimpse at a much, *much* larger game, is that *Skyrim* could very well be the greatest action-RPG ever made. It looks phenomenal. With *Oblivion*, Bethesda made adventuring feel exciting again. With *Skyrim*, we can already see that it's going to feel epic.

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim is being developed by Bethesda Softworks. Check the website for more details: www.elderscrolls.com/skyrim/

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's going to steal hundreds of hours from your life – in a good way.
- Bethesda's new Creation Engine is absolutely beautiful.
- Dragons are just cool, right?
- It's Bethesda. It's *The Elder Scrolls*. It's going to be awesome.

READ ME

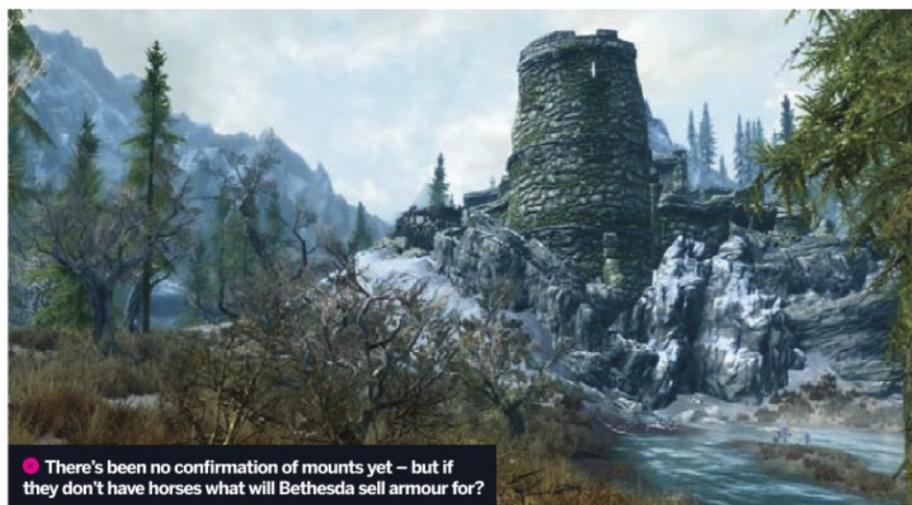
Skyrim is set 200 years after *Oblivion*. Alduin, the Nordic god of destruction, has returned in the form of a giant dragon. Guess whose job it is to stop him?



● *Skyrim* currently has 140 dungeons and another 100-plus 'points of interest'.



● "The paradigm for how we build our worlds has not changed since *Terminator: Future Shock*," says Todd Howard.

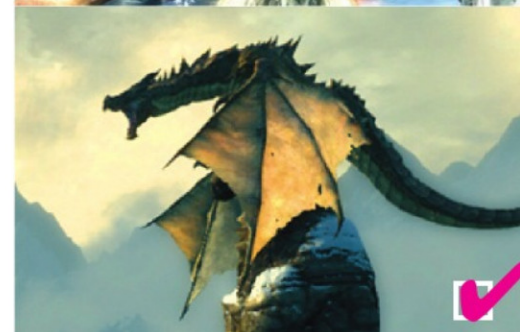


● There's been no confirmation of mounts yet – but if they don't have horses what will Bethesda sell armour for?

NATURAL SELECTION

What kind of creatures will you kill in *Skyrim*?

Wolves?	Yes!
Yetis?	Yes!
Dragons?	Yes!
Xenomorphs?	No



How do you do it, Howard?

Todd Howard, game director

How big is the world?

The world is about the same size as *Oblivion*

but the difference comes in the mountains because they can channel us in different ways. They create less space but they take more time to get across because you can't just cut across them. So it feels bigger. As far as the environments it's really varied. We have our pine forest and mountains as well as a big, grassy tundra, a fall forest, a volcanic tundra and a big glacier area.

Is there a level cap?

There's no level cap. There's probably some mathematical level cap but like *Oblivion* it just kind of works itself out naturally. The levelling is faster – in *Oblivion* and *Fallout* we see them as 1-25 games whereas this is 1-50. We've just sped it up. There are so many perks – and the power comes from these perks – so we wanted

to get it going faster. The more you play, though, the more it slows down.

How many dragons are there in the game?

There's not a finite amount of dragons. Like any other creature they can spawn randomly, and we use the Radiant Story System for that. It can time how long since you last saw a dragon, what your level is, and whether it's time to bring one in.

When we sat down to do dragons it was very conservative but after two years of designing they can really do anything. Recently a designer had put three of them in and they swooped past, and I ran to the mountains to try and lose them, and it really felt like *The Two Towers* when Frodo is in the swamp.

Also, all the dragons talk as they're breathing fire. They're speaking. And there are some that speak English as well... but I don't want to spoil it any more than that.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2012

SSX

Creative director Todd Batty goes beyond the hype



Would it be fair to say SSX is still going to be pretty crazy, but not too crazy?

Yeah, I'd say that's a fair statement. I mean we've got no qualms about it; we're making an arcade game. I know there were some false rumours in the early days about SSX going sim, but over the top is where SSX has always been and we set out right from the beginning to make sure it was like that.

So keeping the 'old' SSX feel has been as much about keeping it feeling fresh and cutting edge as it is about being frantic and arcadey?

For sure. In the early days we looked at it and asked, 'What do we believe is the essence of SSX? What are the staples of the franchise? What are the things we know we need to deliver to make sure this game feels like an SSX game?' That was things like bringing back some of the characters. We need to build out their personalities. We need to have crazy, over-the-top courses. We needed ridiculously big tricks. We looked at those things and we said if we're going to remain true to those core and key mechanics of the franchise then it was open game. We looked at the best in class of how design has evolved, what people are doing with online and multiplayer. Games have come a long way in the last seven or eight years and there was a lot of great design that we could pull on from what the industry is doing. We think a combination of

a big, whole-hearted scoop of what SSX was and what it stood for that we knew returning fans were going to be wanting and then how can we pull it forward and introduce some new design philosophies and really come up with that triple-A franchise formula?

We understand you're also adding some customisation and light RPG elements to SSX. Is that an important part of adding value for gamers as well as giving them new challenges over time?

Again it's hard to find ways to grow a 90 plus rated game, but one of the big areas that we thought would be an opportunity for us to do something bigger was in character customisation. There were a couple of paths we could go on there. We looked at making the game all about creating a player and in the Sports label that would have been easy to do. We have Photo GameFace and a lot of great tech in a lot of the sports games, but SSX: *On Tour* was the only SSX game that had a created character and it wasn't very well received. I think SSX has always been about the IP characters. Then we thought we should give you the opportunity to progress and develop and customise the IP characters. When we looked at SSX and how they handled that in the past the majority of progression and customisation was aesthetics based, but I'm very much a gameplay first designer. I'm

a much bigger fan of having character customisation and having character progression where what you do to your character changes the way the game plays. That's where we started coming up with ideas for things like the wingsuit. It's an amazing thing when you get to equip your character with the wingsuit for the first time and you can jump off a cliff and actually do a controlled descent and access different parts of levels.

Will there be more items beyond the wingsuit that will also change up SSX's gameplay?

Yeah. Another thing we discussed was when you add a new mechanic like that it gives new opportunities to score tricks and lots of other possibilities. We have a really cool complete gear design that we're not going into full details on just yet, but we have lots of exciting new pieces and every one introduces a new kind of gameplay, a new gameplay mechanic, a new control mechanic and they all have something that will change the play experience. That's where I think the strongest customisation type design comes from.

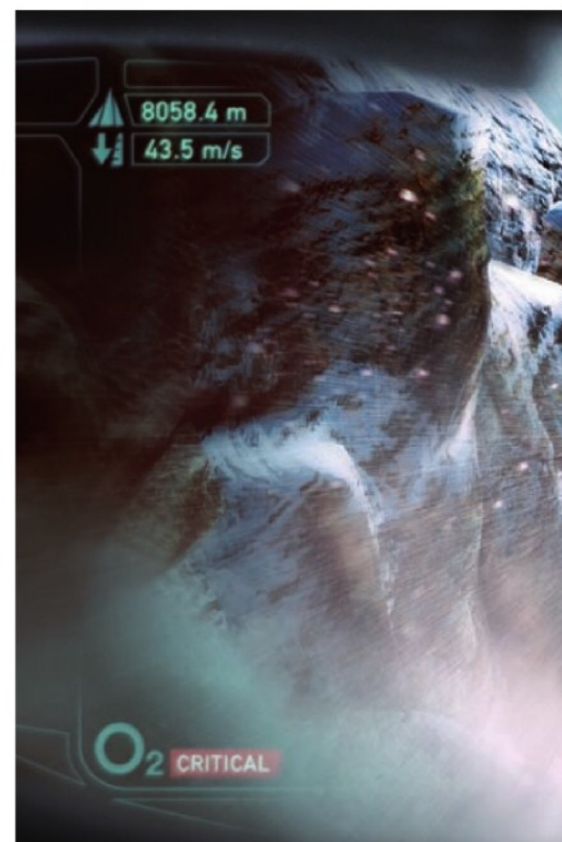
SSX is being developed by EA Canada in clear view of the mountains around Vancouver. You can get more from www.ea.com/ssx



Survival gameplay in SSX will get pretty intense.



As this screen shows, SSX has lost none of its insanity in the courses.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Exactly the kind of balls-out crazy, high-flying and free-wheeling gameplay SSX has always delivered.
- A full roster of classic SSX stars from the past, redesigned to fit its new look and feel.

- The brand-new physics engine means you can trick off any surface so long as you have momentum.
- There's so much more than just the wingsuit. EA will be revealing more cool items later in the year.

READ ME

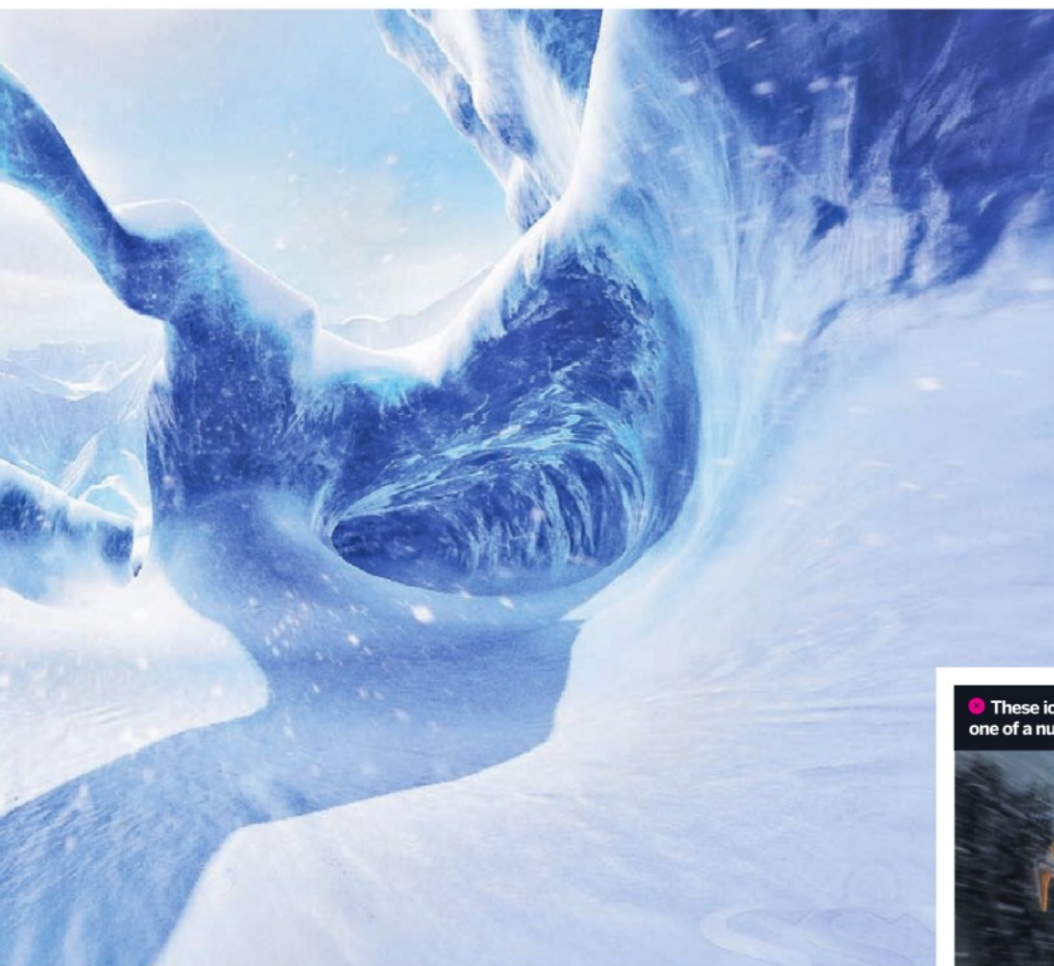
EA Canada is promising more tracks and locations than any other SSX that's been released. Using NASA maps to help build the mountains has made that easier.



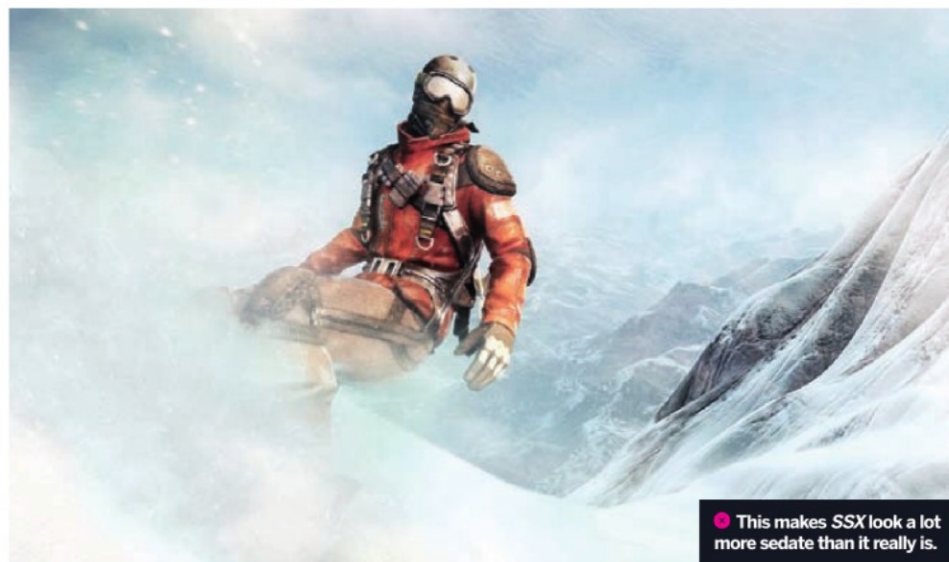
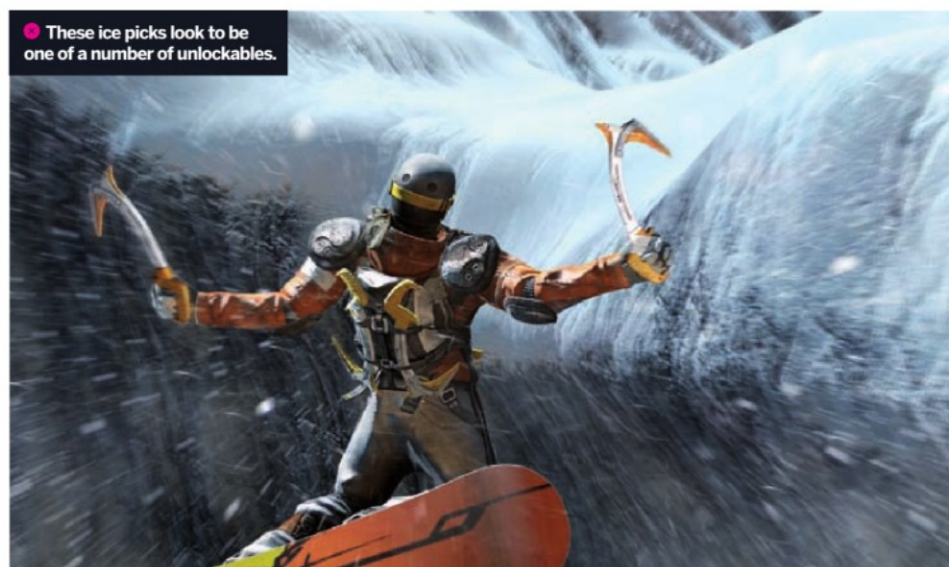
AUTOLOG FOR SSX?

Need For Speed's online influencing SSX

SSX IS SEARCHING for all sorts of new gameplay ideas and mechanics and one of the biggest is going to be how it reworks Autolog to fit the snowboarding world, according to Todd Batty, the game's producer and creative director. "We thought that *Need For Speed's* Autolog was a step in the right direction and we looked at how we could expand that and make it even richer," he said. "As soon as we played *Hot Pursuit* we thought it was really cool and started thinking of ways we might incorporate that. Also there were things we thought we could improve on for SSX."



These ice picks look to be one of a number of unlockables.



This makes SSX look a lot more sedate than it really is.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: 2 SEPTEMBER

Driver: San Francisco

Ubisoft shifts things up a gear for the series' revival

PS3 *Driver* has been out of the limelight for several years now. Once lauded for its vast cities and great driving mechanics, it became overshadowed by the likes of *Grand Theft Auto* and tainted by disappointing sequels.

San Francisco is set to rectify this with its renewed focus on what was always the franchise's strength: driving. Gone are the ropery on-foot sections – this is all about burning rubber and bending fenders. The result feels a lot more like *Burnout* than *GTA*. Keeping players in the car at all times distances *Driver* from the typical sandbox romps it has always been compared to and inadvisably tried to follow.

The biggest addition is the Shift mechanic, with comatose hero Tanner now able to possess any car on the map. It's a concept that initially feels out of place, but it adds a tactical element and seems to be narratively justified. Tanner receives ghostly messages through billboards, so we're hoping it's not a case of 'it was all a dream'.

Apart from this, *Driver: San Francisco* may not feel like it's doing anything new, but it's doing it well. Gameplay is solid, there's plenty of mission variety and the prospect of a more traditional *Driver* is one we can't resist.

Driver: San Francisco is developed by Ubisoft Reflections. The official website can be found at: www.driver-game.com

SETTING THE SCENE

DRIVER FEATURES A plot that's presented like a Nineties action movie. *Driver* villain Jericho busts out of jail, kicking off a frantic chase between the game's protagonist Tanner and the escaping crime lord. A deadly crash seemingly leaves the determined cop in a coma and unlocks his mysterious Shift ability, giving him a fresh chance to track down Jericho.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ It's *Driver*. Good *Driver*. The way it used to be.
- ❑ Open-world Frisco is packed with things to do.
- ❑ The Shift mechanic lends itself to some strategic mayhem.
- ❑ Storyline is like something straight out of a popcorn action flick.

READ ME

San Francisco is one of the world's most iconic car chase cities, and is most well known for Steve McQueen classic *Bullitt*.



STREET CRED

SIDE MISSIONS RANGE from performing stunts for a news van to driving ambulances to hospital before their patients snuff it. Completing these tasks earns Willpower, the currency used to buy upgrades and trigger the next plot event. It's a combination of the old Free Roam modes and the sandbox-style gameplay that seems to be required by law in today's games.

POLICE, CAMERA, ACTION

BLACK-AND-WHITES are a familiar sight in *Driver: San Francisco*. Shifting into them can trigger Felony missions (the equivalent of the old Pursuit mode), where you have to keep within a certain distance of a getaway car as you bash them to build up their Damage bar. Alternatively, ram into a patrol car and see how long you can elude the Fuzz.

SHIFT WORK

REMEMBER THAT BIT in *The Matrix Reloaded* when Agents could take over any car on the freeway and smash it into Trinity and co? Now it's your turn. While it's easy to be dubious about the Shift mechanic, there's no longer an excuse for losing your target – simply switch to a nearer vehicle, or use an oncoming truck to take them out.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: 2012

Prey 2 has influences from the likes of *BioShock*, *Mirror's Edge* and *Assassin's Creed*, which is no bad thing at all.

Prey 2

Matt Bisenius, associate producer on Prey 2, talks us through the sequel...



Why did you decide to shift to open world?

With *Prey*, we did really well with the linear corridor shooter. We wanted to branch out of that and give people choice and options. The biggest choice you can give someone is letting them go wherever they want to and now you can go and do whatever you want.

Have you borrowed ideas from *BioShock*?

BioShock is a lot more linear than what we've got going on. What you're going to see are missions that can take you anywhere throughout the world and missions you can do at will as opposed to be thrown at you and forced upon you. It'll introduce you to new parts of the world, too. There's a lot of variety in our missions. All you've seen so far is a pursuit mission. As far as other ones, there's a ton of variety such as protect the spot, protect the person, breach and infiltrating certain places and loads more. We promise you'll be given a lot of choice.

Why have you abandoned the original game's Native American hero?

I think the character itself doesn't define the franchise. *Prey* was about alien abduction and one man against many aliens, the predator/prey relationship, the Keepers – all of those things carry over into *Prey 2*. So, yeah, we have a new protagonist but we are still *Prey*.

Why did you go for a stereotypical white military protagonist?

What we did was start with 'bounty hunter'. That was our core and we grew from there. So we have this bounty hunter and we need to make him agile and we need to have him equipped and familiar with gadgets and weapons. As we started building this thing that fit our game, we ended up with Killian, and this is what he looks like and this is what he does. It makes sense for our game. We didn't start from the top and say, 'right, white, military guy'. We said bounty hunter, bounty hunter, bounty hunter and this is what we got.

Did you decide against multiplayer because it wouldn't be able to compete with *Call Of Duty*?

I think that has something to do with it but we're a small team. We're cranking away trying to get the single-player game done and as amazing as possible and we're exceeding all expectations we

set for it. If we had added multiplayer we would have been muddying and weakening single-player and that's not what we want. The navigation and the fluidity of that experience is top of the list. A bounty hunter has to move quickly and using weapons and gadgets at all times, so if that wasn't working we would've failed. We had to make him agile and allow the player to feel agile without struggling with the controls.

Were you influenced by the likes of *Mirror's Edge* and *Assassin's Creed*?

We took influence from a lot of places but we started from the bottom, so what does this bounty hunter do? He runs, he jumps, he hangs, he's very agile and all those things mixed with combat seem to make sense for *Prey 2*. We never tried to mimic anything in particular.

What is working with Bethesda like?

They've been amazing. They've been helping since day one and helped set

the direction for the project. It doesn't hurt having their insight and advice where our open world is concerned. They've done it so well so many times it can't hurt to team up with the best.

Will we see a co-op mode?

We just decided to focus on the single-player and co-op was never part of the game. We have a lot here, though. We have the alien noir look, beautiful environment, cool and interesting alien species to interact with and on top of this the extremely fun, fluid combat.

Will there be Move or 3D support?

Never for *Prey 2*. That's something we can consider going forward but not for right now. 3D... never considered it either. The major market isn't using the 3D so it isn't worth targeting.

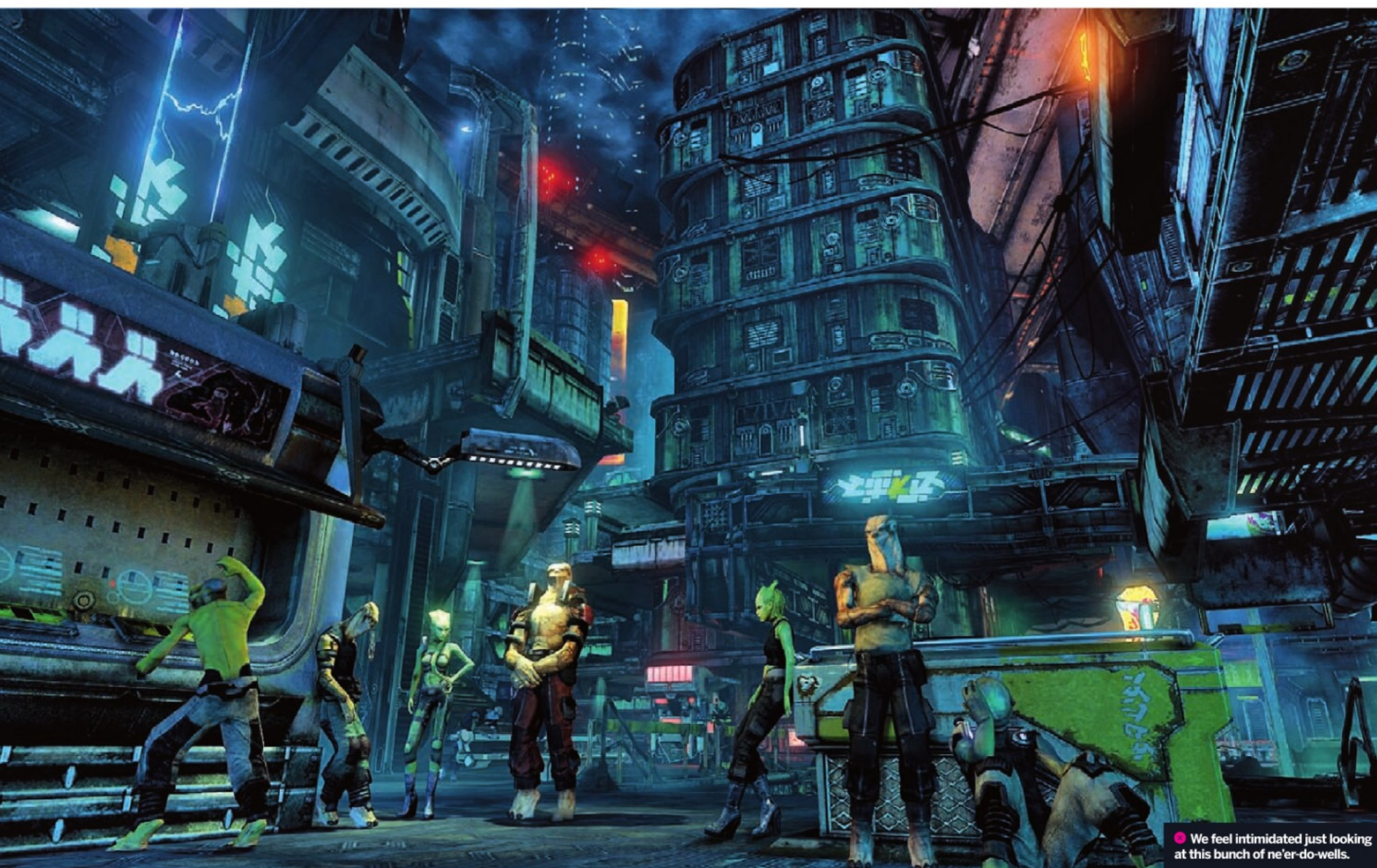
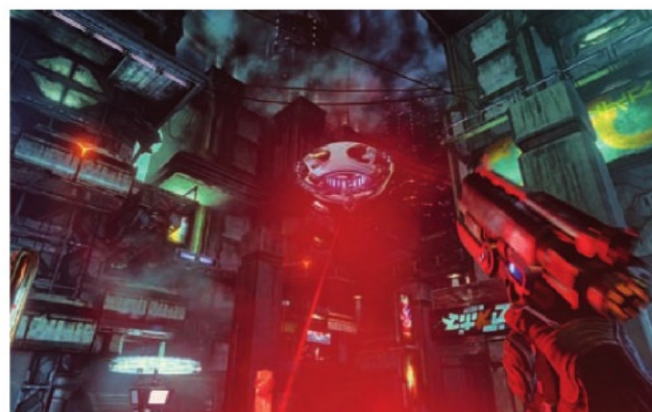
Human Head Studios is so busy making *Prey 2*, it hasn't spent time making humanhead.com look interesting at all. Or updating it. Or using more than three colours.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Prey 2*, which makes it double as good as *Prey 1*.
- No awful multiplayer option to scroll past on the menu.
- It is open world now, which is much better than linear corridors.
- Though it won't have the notorious fanny doors of the last one.

READ ME

Prey's linear corridor shooter starring Tommy has made way for an open-world sequel starring a new bounty hunter, with the original hero now reduced to an NPC role.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: Q3

Saints Row: The Third

Volition tells us why third time's the charm

PS3

This is the sixth attempt at writing the intro to this preview. It's hard work. How do you capture the madness of *Saints Row 2* in a few punchy sentences? It was a swaggering, boisterous sequel that astonished with its vulgarity and humour and then engrossed with its flexibility and solid gameplay. While po-faced *Grand Theft Auto IV* was busy picking the coolest tune to play on the party stereo, *Saints Row 2* was already swinging from the chandeliers with a bottle of San Miguel in one hand and its trousers in the other. No game deserved a sequel more than THQ's unique slice of madness.

Which is why we're here now, telling you about *Saints Row: The*

gangs. A gunfight breaks out, you get away and the Saints are forced to start over in Steelport. This means a whole new city and as you can tell from the screenshots, there's a new visual flavour to the game, too. It is, in effect, a reboot of the franchise. Right?

"Yeah, I would say that's accurate," says producer Greg Donovan (we asked him the question, rather than Greg somehow knowing we were writing that sentence and booming a response from the heavens). "Well, I mean, we can get into semantics here, right? It's still an open-world game where you have missions and activities and it's got the humour that really started to be iconic in *Saints Row 2* but when people say reboot, a big part of

At the end of *Saints Row 1*, you own the city. At the end of *Saints Row 2*, you own the city. So we didn't want to repeat that

Third. Following their takeover of Stilwater in *Saints Row 2*, the Saints find themselves behind bars after a botched bank robbery attempt. While there, they learn that a crime agency known as the Syndicate has muscled into Stilwater and bribed the police force. Syndicate leader Loren smuggles you out of jail along with fellow Saints Johnny Gat and Shaundi and attempts to strike a deal that he'll let you live if you hand over your

that is the visual upgrade compared to *Saints Row 2*."

Steelport allows the team to take the experience from the first two games to craft a city that's easier to navigate, so you won't have to gawp at a clustered GPS every few seconds. That's not the only advantage, though. "In *Saints Row 2*, we had to retrofit the gameplay into the spaces that we already had existing," explains design director Scott Phillips. "In *Saints Row*:

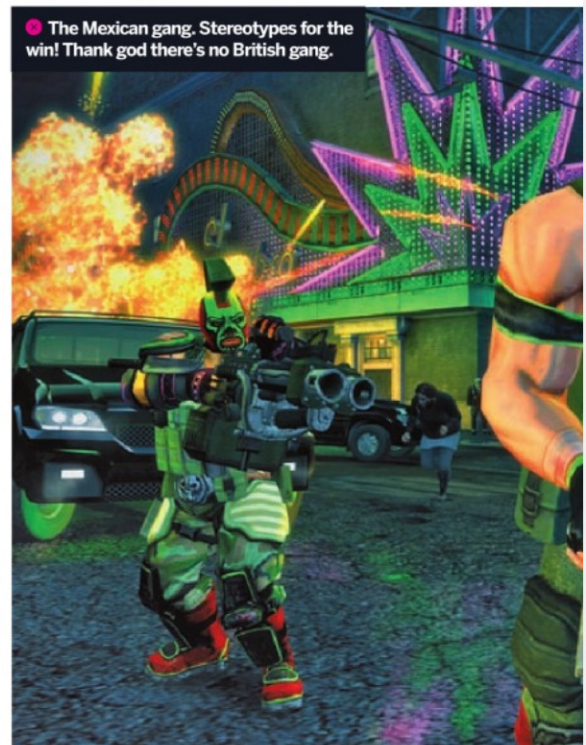
The Third, we were able to design the city with everything we know that we wanted to do from the get-go. So we could make a lot more specific locations for missions, gameplay and activities, so that the whole city feeds into the gameplay enjoyment you have. You don't just have to work with what you're given, we're able to change things on the fly a lot faster. For instance, on *Saints Row 2*, generally it would have taken a week to change some things. Say you want to move some crates that are in the gameplay space and causing trouble. On *Saints Row: The Third*, that can take 30 minutes. So our scale with how fast we can change the city and iterate to make the game more fun is much better than *Saints Row 2*."

But what drove the decision to create Steelport in the first place? Surely the crates weren't that big of a headache? "Just story-wise, the Saints have taken over all of Stilwater twice," explains Phillips. "At the end of *Saints Row 1*, you own the city. At the end of *Saints Row 2*, you own the city. So we didn't want to repeat that. We wanted to spread you out and we wanted to treat the Saints as a multinational. They're expanding, they're growing. You're sort of a virus, spreading across the country. At the same time, you're expanding your celebrity status. People know you, people love you. We just wanted to take it to a different place and give you a different area to explore and have fun with."

It's not just the city that's changed. The respect system of old allowed you to unlock new missions and new clothes. Now, it can be spent on a levelling-up system of sorts, which replaces the old *Saints Row 2* system of having to grind activities and missions to boost your character. "Some of our upgrades are really, >



● The Mexican gang. Stereotypes for the win! Thank god there's no British gang.





● Dapper-looking gang, no? If it was us, it'd be all basketball tops and clown make-up.



● Flying around in a helicopter should be one of the game's high points (get it?!).

THE AWESOME BUTTON

Also known as the sprint button

WE HEARD SAINTS Row: *The Third* had an 'awesome' button, so we ask Volition if it was true or not. Greg Donovan laughs when hearing the question. "Well, that's what it was called in pre-production. On the UI we don't call it the awesome button but we like to think that the resulting action is awesome." Then Scott Phillips takes over to explain its function. "You modify any action you do by sprinting. So as you're running around the world, if you want to jump into a car you can press a button and you dive right through the windshield, into the driver's seat, kick the driver out and you're instantly driving that car... it's a modifier to all the actions in the game that make them cooler."

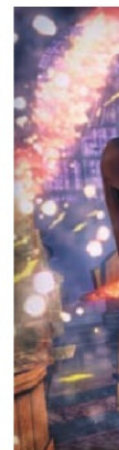
PREVIEW

CO-OP RETURNS

And Volition is leaving it untouched

"You know, our philosophy is if it ain't broke, don't fix it," says design director Scott Phillips about *Saints Row: The Third's* co-op. "We thought that the seamless drop in, drop out for the entire campaign worked. The players and press liked it. So from a technical standpoint, we're not changing it. We'd like to include some more differences on playing Mission A whether it's single player or co-op, to... tell that the difficulty has gone up now that you're in co-op. Utilise that kind of experience towards missions so you can tell it's a little different to playing single-player."

● You'll get blown up or catch a cold if you go out dressed like that. Or so we've heard.





● Enter shop, smash shop up, revel in the chaos, feel bad, leave. Just like real life!



● The weapons in *Saints Row: The Third* will be... interesting, shall we say.



● The customisation has always been a huge part of *Saints Row's* appeal.



● Volition looks like it's done a good job of cranking up the carnage yet again.

➤ really powerful and extremely fun," explains Phillips. "I was actually just playing with no shotgun reload, unlimited shotgun ammo and a fully upgraded shotgun. So essentially, I could destroy cars in two shotguns flat. It was extremely fun. Couple that with huge upgrades to your health, how fast you recover health, upgrades to your gangs so they carry better weapons... you just get immensely powerful through purchasing these upgrades."

Finally, there's the game's story. Some might consider it the least important aspect of an open-world game, which is why Volition is changing things up for this third instalment of the *Saints Row* series. It will be a linear story that allows the developer to... well, producer Greg Donovan can probably explain better than we can. "We knew we wanted to go with a more linear structure that still had choices and

segments where you fight against this gang, or you can only play these areas because of the state of the world and so on," he explains. "So I think the structure will be easier to follow. You'll know what state the

It should make it a lot easier for players who play for three or four hours but the next day, they forgot what happened so they're lost. I don't think that's going to happen in *Saints Row: The Third*."

There will be more vulgarity, more humour, a new city, an awesome button and the return of the amazing co-op

world is in, what groups are still alive, you'll know who you killed, who has betrayed who, all that sort of stuff is a little easier to follow. Any time you start a mission, we'll give you a bit of background on what happened. It's not like 'last week on *Saints Row: The Third*' this is what you saw. Not something like that. But just more of a primer of 'you're about to do this, here's certain stuff going on in the world, so you can continue forward.'

However, what will happen with *Saints Row: The Third* is more vulgarity, more humour, a new city, an awesome button, the return of the amazing co-op and Volition knowing exactly what we want from this sequel. Get those chandeliers ready – *Saints Row* is on the way...

Now it's nearly done with *Red Faction: Armageddon*, Volition is turning its attention to *Saints Row: The Third*. Keep up to date at volition-inc.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ It's the only game we know of that has an 'awesome' button.
- ❑ Co-op in *Saints Row 2* was brilliant and they're not changing it.
- ❑ Along with *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, *Saints Row 2* was this gen's biggest surprise.
- ❑ Which means we're super-mega-ultra pumped for *Saints Row: The Third*.

READ ME

With the *Saints* forced out of Stilwater by new gang Syndicate, you team up with old faces Johnny Gat and Shaundi to dominate new town Steelport.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Max's classic diving-backwards-while-shooting never fails to impress.

Max Payne 3

Embrace the Payne

PS3

L.A. Noire is all about the sweat-inducing meticulousness of examining a corpse; the agonising toil of probing a crime scene to a point where your eyelids begin to involuntarily quake and your brain begins to throb manically. Suffice to say, *Max Payne 3* marks a stark juxtaposition for Rockstar Games.

Anyone familiar with the franchise (and if you think we're referring to the awful Mark Wahlberg movie then please leave now), will know that it concerns itself more with creating grizzly crime scenes than it does investigating them. Highly stylised action is the name of the game, as the eponymous dogged cop brings all his slo-mo antics into the next gen, swapping the chilly, noir-swept metropolitan streets for which the game is synonymous, for something a bit more tropical.

Hold the sombrero for a moment – Rockstar assures that by moving the action to Sao Paulo, Brazil, *Max Payne* has lost none of the stark

grit that made the predecessors such cult hits. Set roughly eight years after the events of the second instalment, Max is now a washed-up pill-popping booze-hound ex-cop, working for a private security firm on unfamiliar streets, a long way from home.

Max is in charge of protecting the family of Rodrigo Branco, a rich real estate guru, along with his two brothers: Victor, a local politician, and Marcello, a playboy party-animal. Of course, it wouldn't be a *Max Payne* game if the whole plot wasn't riddled with double-crossing wrongdoers and the prospect of absolution, so we're speculating that Rodrigo's wife, Fabiana, and her sister Giovanna will be hitting those all-important emotional beats to motivate all that lovely gratuitous bloodshed.

Undeniably, the main draw of *Max Payne* is the wonderfully cinematic shoot-outs that fuel the explosive gameplay. While *Matrix*-style 'bullet time' has been

grotesquely overused over the years – appearing in various guises, such as *Stranglehold*'s Tequila Time or *Fallout*'s V.A.T.S. – *Max Payne 3* integrates the series' staple slo-mo gunplay with NaturalMotion's Euphoria engine. The results: each shoot-dodge move has Max reacting naturally to the environment and objects around him, as he charges through the air in his usual forward-diving, gun-blazing nonchalant way.

Rockstar has also stated to have extended the concept of the bullet time gameplay to include areas that will trigger 'bullet time set pieces', allowing for a new 'interpretation' of *Max Payne*'s signature style. Still, however much that sounds like those door-busting *Call Of Duty* moments it's clear Rockstar is working hard to deliver a fresh perspective on Payne.

The integration of a cover system is a promising start. Previous games had Max swaggering into confrontations like the Terminator with crippling neurosis. Here, the

new cover system is promised to be intuitive, which should hopefully add a layer of strategy to the repetitive run-'n'-gun shoot-a-thon.

So it seems no returning element of *Max Payne* has gone unchanged. The series' original voice artist, James McCaffrey, returns, here donating both his face and body for performance capture and likeness (complete with bald dome and facial fuzz). There's also news of sidekicks joining Max on his quest for, well, whatever reason he's riddling people with bullet holes for – could we possibly be seeing some sort of co-op element?

Beyond our fervent speculation, what we do know is that *Max Payne 3* will relish in the finer details – an area in which Rockstar never fails to excel. Whether it's highlighting the sweat dripping from Max's newly shaven cranium; the exact way in which a case expels from a gun chamber; or even the beautiful carnage of a destructible environment being torn apart by bullets. With Rockstar at the helm, this could be action like you've never seen it before.

Max Payne 3 is developed by Rockstar Games. If you'd like to learn more about slowly shooting things, head over to www.rockstargames.com/maxpayne3

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



New tropical setting makes this the boldest *Max Payne* to date.



New cover mechanic should inject some much-needed skill.



Rockstar is filling this game with its usual level of painstaking detail.



New sidekicks should prove an interesting dynamic for the lone wolf ex-detective.

READ ME

This is the first in the series not to be developed by Finnish developer Remedy Entertainment. Sounds like a good thing to us!





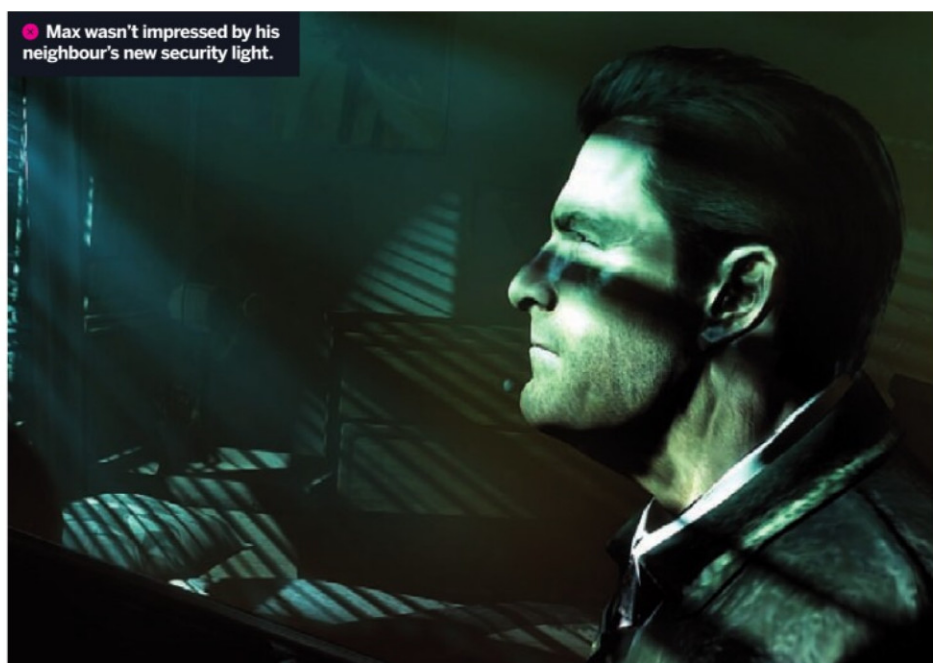
● Max's clothing will show sweat and blood as the action intensifies.



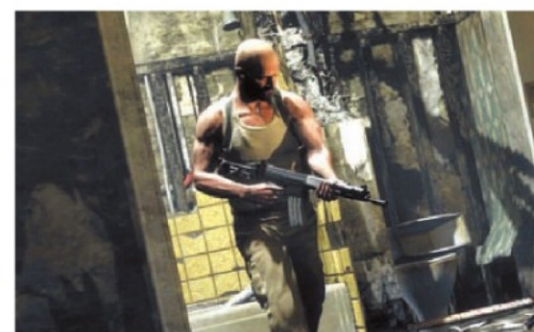
● Dual pistols say business; floral shirt says margaritas back at his place.



● Max wasn't impressed by his neighbour's new security light.



● It's definitely an area on the up and up.



HAIR TODAY...

Gone down to chin tomorrow

ONE OF THE most drastic changes to *Max Payne* is the ex-dick himself. No longer slick-haired, with a rough slice of stubble, ol' Max has undergone a bit of a makeover. Or a mental breakdown. With a newly shaved head and a big bushy beard, Rockstar has gone some way to show how broken Max has become since the last time we saw him. Addicted to painkillers and guzzling booze, this is the darkest the character has ever been. It's not all bad, though: like any good tourist in a tropical climate, he's at least got an assortment of colourful, floral shirts.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: JULY

Arcana Heart 3

[Our legal team has deleted this standfirst]

PS3 In the sweaty manpit of Imagine Publishing known as 'The Games Room', there's a small girl in a magician's hat spinning cards around. There's another girl in a big metal rabbit, another wearing roller skates and a girl riding around on the back of a giant cartoon dog. In the corner are male games journos asking questions like "what?" and, erm, "what?"

Fortunately, this isn't part of **Play's** drive to push the boundaries of taste and



law in this country but rather, *Arcana Heart 3*. In short, imagine *BlazBlue* with an all-female cast of questionable age. In slightly less short, imagine the same thing but with it actually being a solid fighting game as well, trading on its bizarre welding of deep mechanics to a bonkers cast.

You pick a character, then you choose an Arcana, which ranges from the mundane (Light, Earth, Water) to the bizarre (Evil, Mirrors, Punishment). The Arcana picked will grant you unique attacks and supers. The combo system follows the *BlazBlue* system of chaining and there's a Homing button to follow up combos in the air. Throw in the Arcana system and that Homing button also cancels attacks and there's a lot of potential for shenanigans.

Which isn't a sentence we feel entirely comfortable writing in a preview on a game full of underage girls. At least we can comfortably say that the game itself is looking very, very good.

If you can understand Japanese, then examu.co.jp has all the *Arcana Heart 3* information you need. At least we think it does.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The combo system, inspired by *BlazBlue*, is super easy to learn.
- Bucks genre's pretend-3D trend in favour of 2D animation.
- Features tons of characters and Arcanas to choose from.
- It has a girl on a cartoon dog, who draws planes that fly. That's brilliant, by the way.



RELEASE DATE: JULY

UFC Personal Trainer

Kick, punch, it's all in the mind

PS3 It turns out our quest to stop being fat doesn't begin and end with those titles featured in our recent Playtest in issue 205. No, THQ is about to throw its *fighting* gloves into the eight-sided *fighting* octagon in order to get players *fighting* fit. Or something like that.

Our brief time so far with the program shows few actual differences to other fitness titles. Instead it's a different focus, with more emphasis on strength workouts and improving your *fighting* technique rather than general fitness.

Obviously *UFC Personal Trainer* isn't going to turn you into the next Anderson Silva on its own, but it could certainly help you shift that gut you drag around with you every time you get up to waddle somewhere, fatso. Ah, sorry, we've got a bit up ourselves since Ian's amazing weight loss success.



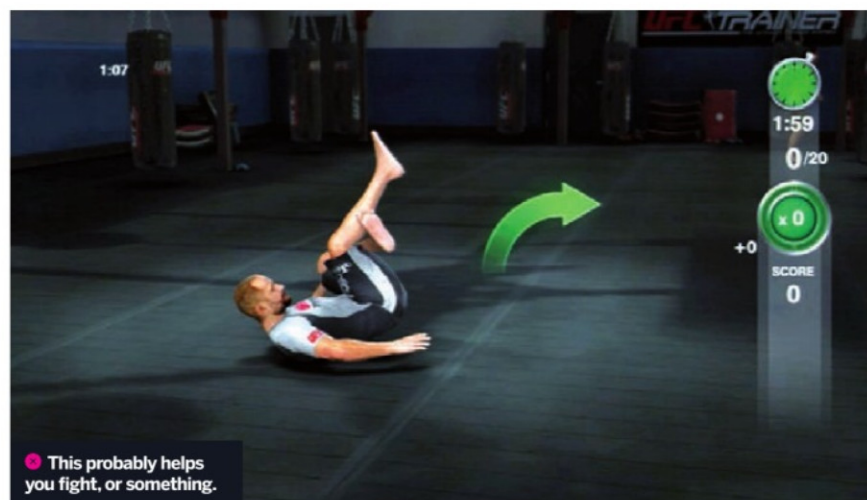
It shouldn't come as too much of a surprise to learn that there are dozens of different exercises available, individual programs can be tailored to a player's need, one-off workouts can also be carried out and all manner of different stats are registered so you can keep track of how well or, more likely, how badly, you're doing.

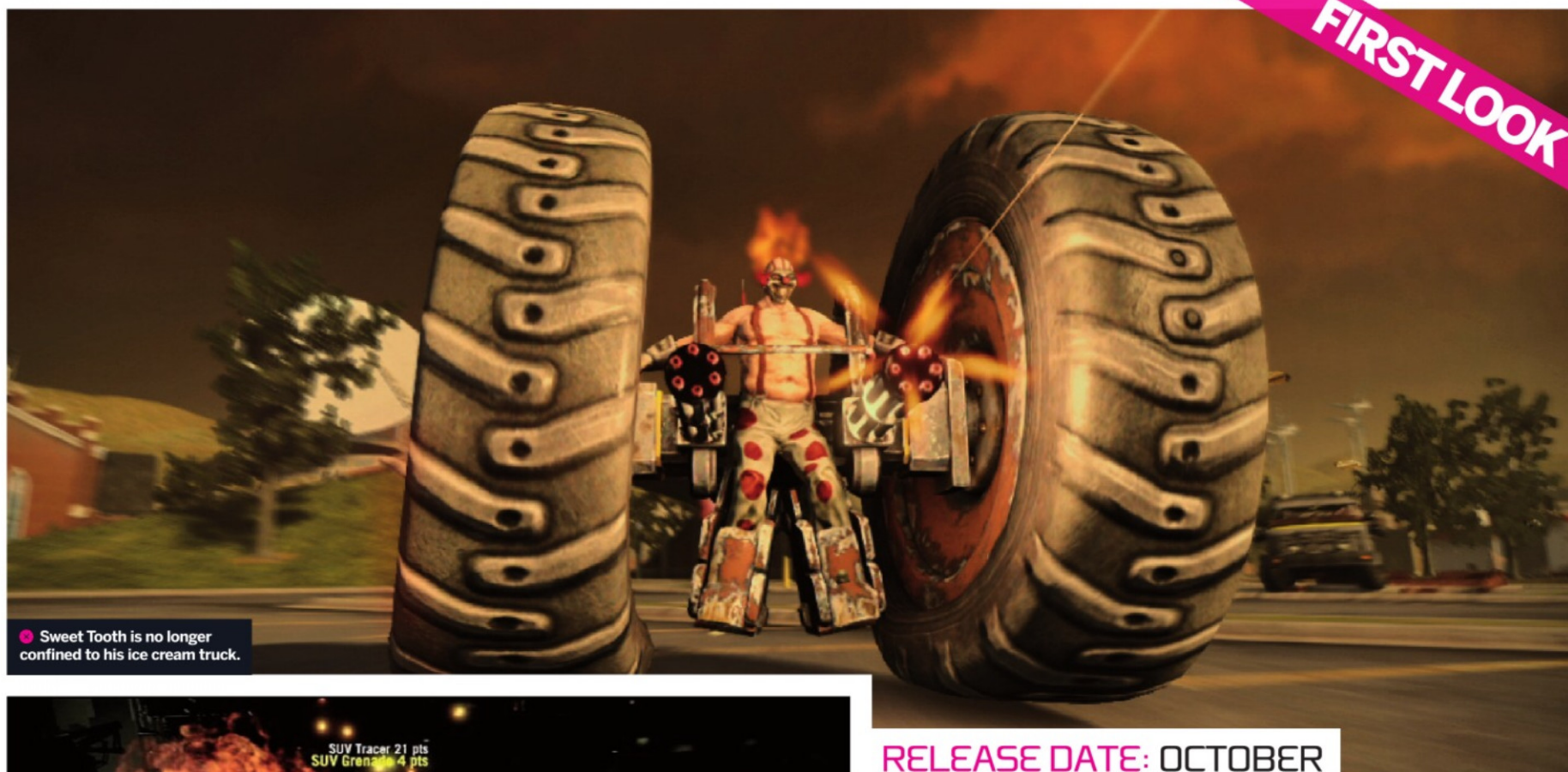
If we're being cynical we might say it's just another fitness game, just done with a licence and all that entails slapped on top of it. And we are being cynical, so that's exactly what we're going to say. However, it seems to work and it could be enough to lure some into the world of fitness.

UFC Personal Trainer is being developed by Heavy Iron Studios. Check out www.ufcpersonaltrainer.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A fitness game where you don't have to stare at Mel B's stupid face.
- Measure your progress in loads of different ways to make sure you're getting better.
- Teach yourself how to fight so you can handle the mean streets.
- Real UFC talent on board will encourage superfans, probably.





● Sweet Tooth is no longer confined to his ice cream truck.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Twisted Metal

Still painting it black...



PS3 It's an iconic image known to PlayStation fans the world over. Psychotic clown and unofficial leader of the Twisted Metal clan, Sweet Tooth, flying around racetracks firing missiles from his helicopter and... wait. Cue well known and always *hilarious* comedy sound effect of a record screeching to a halt. Sweet Tooth? In a helicopter?

Such is life in *Twisted Metal*, the latest addition to the, er, *Twisted Metal* series. Having now retired from all things *God Of War*, temporarily or otherwise, David Jaffe has now returned to the series where he originally made his name. And boy, he has gone crazy ringing the changes.

The visuals have now moved the exaggerated reality of old to something bordering dangerously close to videogaming's favourite fad of yesteryear, cel-shading. It's not quite tumbled full-on into cel-shading territory but it's definitely a marked shift away from the grittiness of old.

A bigger change is that you're now able to mix and match characters with vehicles. There are only three playable characters, Sweet Tooth, Doll Face and Mr Grimm, who can fit inside any of the game's 16 vehicles. And yes, one of those 16 vehicles will be a helicopter, which has weaker armour and attack power to make up for its unique ability to... well, fly about.

It's always worrying when we hear about change because **Play** is a timid creature that pees its pants at the thought of a move away from familiarity but even so, there's a part of us that's excited. It's the same part of our sensitive nostalgia glands that *Mortal Kombat* tickled when it bounced back to form recently, and if *Twisted Metal* offers the same mix of guilty thrills that it did back in its PSone days, we'll be all over this. Even if we are all over it via a small helicopter rather than an ice-cream truck.

Twisted Metal is being cooked up by Eat Sleep Play, who can be found at eatsleepplay.biz/about.php.



● It's dark! Not just the tone but the brightness, too. What is actually happening?

SPLIT PERSONALITY

What's better than two players?

THREE PLAYERS, OBVIOUSLY. And what's even better than that? Four players! Eat Sleep Play has confirmed that as well as a 16-player rumble, there will be a four-player split-screen option. Unfortunately, no one pointed out that five players is even better than four players, so we'll have to wait a bit longer for that.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ Four-player split-screen, 16 players online.
- ❑ Series creator David Jaffe is heading up the team.
- ❑ Helicopters and choppers add vehicle variety.
- ❑ It'll make you feel nostalgic about PSone and PS2.

READ ME

A return for the cult vehicular combat series, which cuts down on the amount of playable characters and pushes them outside of their trademark vehicles.

PREVIEW



Go in all guns blazing and this is likely to be the result.

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Sighs of relief versus grunts of rage in Adam Jensen's search for the truth



The *Deus Ex* franchise has always been about choice, and *Human Revolution*, the latest game in the cyberpunk-themed series, despite being more accessible than the previous games, continues that.

Armed with genetic augmentations (Sarif Industries' answer to health insurance), *Human Revolution*'s protagonist Adam Jensen can tackle any situation in

a number of different ways, using the best of balls-out action or balls-very-much-in stealth.

Either way, a satisfying and challenging experience awaits gamers – here's how our two very different approaches to the game's FEMA map, a few hours into the game, panned out...

Eidos Montreal is bringing *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* to its conclusion, before moving on to the announced *Thi4f*.

A shockingly pedestrian screenshot for an artistically accomplished game.

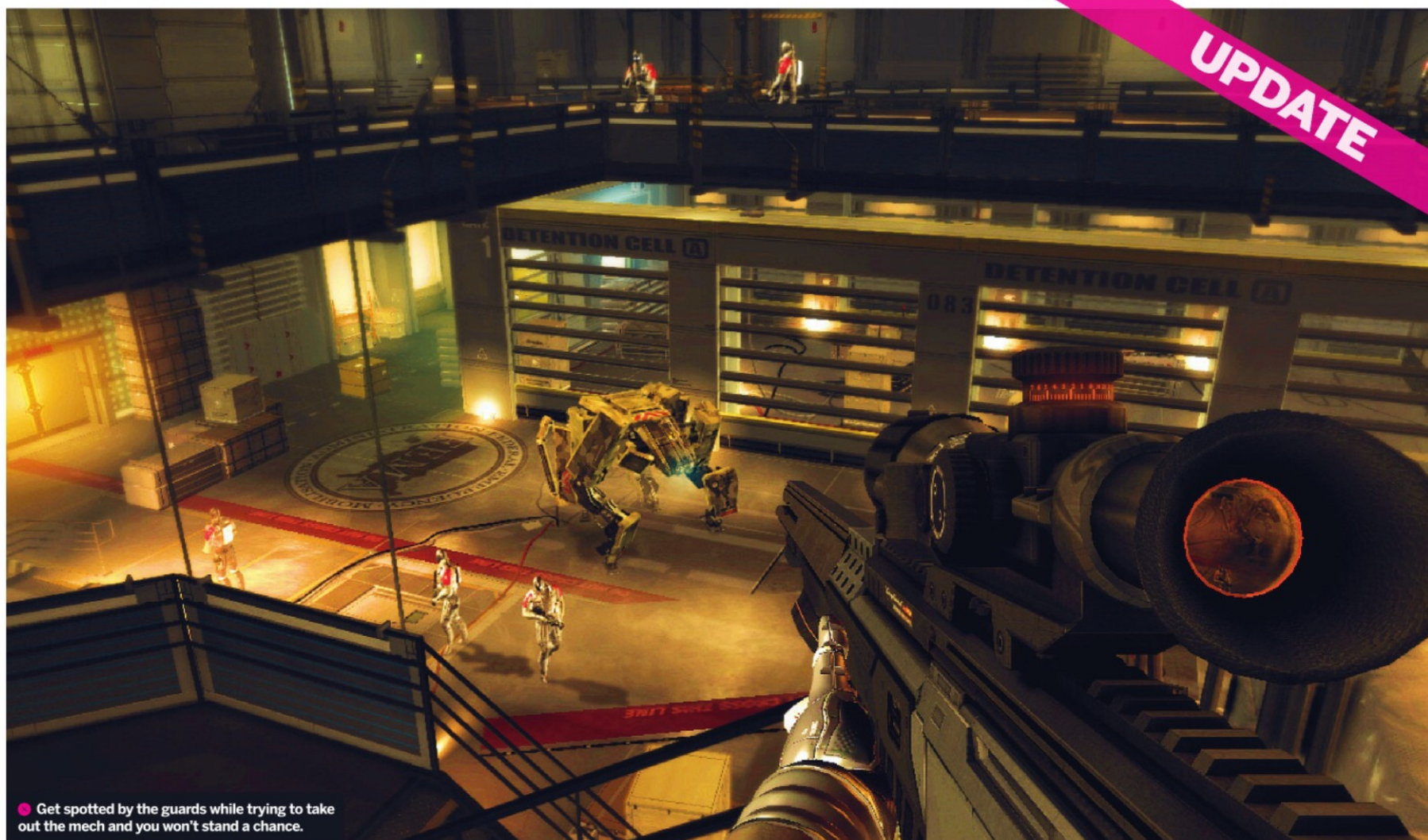


WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Having conversations with NPCs and deliberately trying to annoy them.
- Such incredibly detailed levels and hub worlds, filled with vaguely rude NPCs.
- Whatever approach you choose, the game offers branching skill trees and pleasing new skills.
- Jensen has a cool apartment, which is cleaner than it should be for a man who's never in.

READ ME

Human Revolution is set in five different cities, including Detroit and Shanghai, and takes place in 2027, 25 years before the original *Deus Ex*.



● Get spotted by the guards while trying to take out the mech and you won't stand a chance.

ASSAULT

GOING IN GUNS-A-BLAZIN' is a risky approach. There's only enough bullets to just about get you by. Blind fire, for example, is a huge gamble when you're ten bullets away from empty, while it's always best to gather every bit of ammo you can and find the right tactical spot before opening fire.

We spend Praxis (upgrade points) on Adam's armour to give us a fighting chance with our Jack Bauer-esque 'assault' mentality. The first part of the level tasks us with reaching an elevator past a rainy courtyard; after dispatching a couple of foes with a bullet in the back, we're soon being rounded upon by an angry grenade-lobbing squad. Later, after completing this long firefight and heading down the lift, we're faced with a huge, soldier-filled warehouse, not to mention a mech.

Switching between cover is key, until we find extra ammo and a rocket launcher. A quick EMP grenade does in the mech before the bad guys move in. It's the same deal: there's a shortage of ammo and without planning or use of cover, the battle would've gone the way of popper trousers.

So, to approach the game like a violent freight train, we still had to employ some sneaking to get the upper hand, which is good, as the game is asking you to fashion your play style around the experience. Sadly, a tricky boss encounter at the end removes all the tactical finesse that thrilled us during the mission. *Human Revolution* cheapens itself a bit with this – still, until then, it showed that even ardent *COD* fans could hop the *Deus Ex* difficulty bar provided they're not too buffoonish.



● This beautifully animated mech is actually easy to kill, no matter the approach.

STEALTH



WITH STEALTH, WE favour the game's energy-eating cloaking system, which only lasts for a few seconds at a time despite being very effective – we quickly sneak past a group of men in the courtyard, who notice our footsteps in the rain, but they arrive at the scene too late. They really should've stayed indoors.

By the time we stealthily reached the elevator, we'd still only fired one bullet, so this approach is certainly doable with the right discipline. The second part of the level was more intense – we have to destroy the mech with an EMP grenade while hiding out of sight, before sneaking past cameras on a stairway. Any time we're spotted by guards in this mode, however, we don't stand

a chance. If you choose a combat style, it seems, you're best off committing to it properly.

The boss fight with the mercenary is actually slightly less reprehensible in the stealth approach. It's easier to disappear, and then reappear when you're comfortable with the odds, despite the questionable logic of the AI – even so, it exposes how out of place bosses are in a game like *Human Revolution*, where strategy should be everything. Nevertheless, staying hidden represents a more nerve-wracking and therefore rewarding experience than assault, at this point. It's merging the two and discovering your own style that'll be most engaging when the game arrives, though.

**RELEASE DATE:** TBC

Tomb Raider

It's a brave new world for Lara

PS3

The standard image most have of Lara Croft is one drilled into our consciousness across nine games, two movies, buxom models and tons of other media that's come to define the adventuring heroine. She's bold, audacious, fearless, confident, sexy, and sports a massive pair of breasts.

Yet a look at these pages reveals a completely different type of star. There's a level of familiarity there but it's offset by a vulnerability that we're not accustomed to. Lara is beaten and scared, limping and hurt. She's a young girl trapped in a confined and hostile environment. It's a far cry from the sassy Lara we remember.

It's this sense of the new and unknown that is to define Lara's tenth adventure. Crystal Dynamics has taken the familiar and twisted it into something different. This is a younger, more inexperienced Lara. The simplicity of the title is indicative of the dev's desire to sell this as a full reboot. It's also something of a misnomer – Lara's no longer raiding tombs, but escaping from them.

It's an origin story in the truest sense, introducing us to Lara on her first expedition of the HMS Endurance. A violent storm shipwrecks the vessel on a

mysterious Japanese island where the rest of the game will take place.

It's a beautiful location – well, beautiful in terms of graphical detail, but perhaps not in aesthetics. It's a dense and ominous place, at once claustrophobic and cavernous. The interiors are littered with skulls and flickering candles. The detail extends to the nature of the place, with water draining across rocks; and flames casting long, black shadows across the walls. The Crystal engine may be old, but it's still looking good.

The story will be one of survival rather than exploration. One scene begins with Lara hanging from the ceiling of a cavern, wrapped in a sheet of canvas by what we presume is one of the island's residents. By swinging back and forth and using a nearby fire to burn the sacking, Lara falls to the floor and is pierced by a spike – a stark reminder that in this game her environment is often just as dangerous as those inhabiting it.

Puzzles will demand real-life physical application of objects. For example, one puzzle requires Lara to detonate some exploding barrels – the trouble is they're behind an extinguishing curtain of water. The solution is to use an ageing mechanism of rotting timber and



As you might expect, Lara will get herself into some rather sticky situations.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's an exciting new direction for a well-worn and much-loved franchise.
- It's more *Batman: Arkham Asylum* than *Tomb Raider: Underworld*.
- The game's puzzles actually feel a natural part of the world.
- Despite what some may think, it's not just a rip-off of *Uncharted*.



rusting metals to manoeuvre crates, which you set alight, along a side passage and around to the barrels.

Tomb Raider's puzzles will all be built around such physical manipulation. Elements like fire and water will need to be considered, but also buoyancy, action and reaction, momentum and weight.

This section ends with the oil drums' explosive force bringing down the walls of the cavern, Lara forced to scramble upward through collapsing rock and grab on to newly emerging platforms. She escapes near-death by darting through a small hole, out of which she emerges on a sun-dappled cove littered with dozens of shipwrecks. It seems Lara's fate may not have been one of coincidence.

It's an exciting look at Crystal Dynamics' striking new direction for a series many of us have been playing for years. We have some issues – this is supposed to be a story of raw survival and defencelessness, but some scenes show Lara wrestling wolves with her bare hands. It will be interesting to see if the dev can make Lara's vulnerability feel as much a part of the gameplay as it is a part of the story, which is a far greater task.

Still, we're excited. *Tomb Raider's* new structure is a bold move. It'll be interesting to see how fans react to the end product, but right now, it looks to be a brilliant re-envisioning of a classic series.

Tomb Raider is being developed at Crystal Dynamics. Find out more at www.crystald.com

READ ME

Tomb Raider (no subtitle this time) sees a young Lara Croft stranded on a mysterious Japanese island. This time she's not raiding tombs – she's escaping them



There's been little word on combat thus far, which has always been a low point for the series.



Lara's younger and more inexperienced, but she's still a pretty good gymnast.

A SAFE PLACE

Tomb Raider feels more Caped Crusader than Nathan Drake

TOMB RAIDER ISN'T an open-world game, but nor is it strictly linear. Its structure shares a lot in common with *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and the *Metroid* games that preceded it. There are base-camp hub areas, such as one built near an ancient Japanese monastery. In the final game you will be able to use these spaces to upgrade Lara's skills or salvage and create new items, but they are also there for exploration and to guide you towards new missions – in the hub previously mentioned you must locate a wolves' lair to find a radio and medicine for the injured captain of the shipwrecked HMS Endurance. Like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, exploration will open up as you gain new tools, such as a climbing axe that will enable Lara to climb to previously inaccessible areas.



Lara's clothes are a little more practical this time round.

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Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Dungeon Siege III – tomb raiding but not as you know it /// Bleak times in L.A. Noire /// Scrubbing up well for DiRT 3

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Get your blocky swagger on

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RELEASE DATE: 17 JUNE

Dungeon Siege III

You only siege when you're winning



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Obsidian Entertainment
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
RPG
Age Rating
16
Website
dungeonsiege.com
Twitter
@Square_Enix_EU
Facebook
on.fb.me/dJj6fX



Is *Dungeon Siege III* a comedy?

It was a question we found ourselves asking again and again as we worked our way around the kingdom of Ehb and kept on meeting stranger and stranger creatures and characters. It's not as if comedy and fantasy role-playing games have no history together.

Over the years the two have gone comfortably hand in hand, but we didn't necessarily expect it of this game. The further we delved the more it became apparent that Obsidian had found a title where it could not only be incredibly respectful of a past series of games, but also stick two fingers up at RPGs as a whole.

The oddities of *Dungeon Siege* are many. The voice acting on the whole borders between the passable and the hilariously bad, but it's something that Obsidian seems to be having some fun with.

For instance, the playable heroine Katarina has a pseudo-Russian/Eastern European voice that doesn't quite hold together and then there's all the seemingly American NPCs you meet. Call us old-fashioned or jingoistic if you want, but aren't fantasy

Play your cards right with this guy and you get awesome weapons.



games supposed to be populated by British characters? Anyway, most of that can be forgiven when NPCs talk about people like Baron Barrenbaron or when you get to meet the guy everyone calls The Krug who only says "krrr". It's silly little things like this that give what might have otherwise been an impenetrable and dry RPG a bit of personality and frankly getting to meet the next nutcase was as good an excuse as any to keep playing.

Some of the cheapness and lack of polish can be jarring at first and it can't be denied that the character models are rather poor in terms of detail and variety. Human characters often look like they've been taken from the same plasticine mould and simply given different hairstyles and a few spots to differentiate them.

This is particularly noticeable on the female characters where old women look more or less like younger women, but with grey locks or shawls, like everyone could be related to one another. Then again, many of the characters are related for one reason or another, so in some cases it may be more deliberate than others.

We found Reinhart Manx very challenging to master, but his high level magic is superb.



There's an eerie quality to all of them that is not entirely unpleasant and sort of fits the mood, but probably isn't all that intentional. Either way, among the humans – because let's face it none of us really expect the goblins or Cyclopes to look like individual characters as we slay them – there's a uniformity that tells you this wasn't an area considered to be a top priority with the development team. Those efforts have gone into other, perhaps more important areas where time and polish actually make a difference to your experience. Besides, the peculiar-looking NPCs and characters add to the comedy factor.

One of those areas and the one we came to appreciate immensely was the looting and item management. We love a good looting game and *Dungeon Siege III* is jam packed full of little items for all four of your warriors

THE GOLDEN AGE

Referencing the past in *Dungeon Siege*'s present

Like any decent fantasy world *Dungeon Siege* is very good at giving you a sense of an older and deeper story going on. There are often notes, parchments and posters scattered around, giving you background on the places you visit. The most enjoyable references, though, are the ones that hark back to the original

Dungeon Siege with events from that game being referenced with this new generation of heroes. You don't need to have played those games, though. That history just helps to give *Dungeon Siege III* a lived-in feel. It helps you believe that this is a very old place with all sorts of issues you need to tread carefully around.





Upgrades can increase your chance of a Critical Hit.



What would a fantasy RPG be without spiders to smash?

Low Gained - Thief's Letter



When Anjali goes all Human Torch on us we're pleased she's on our side.



Purchase Proficiencies

Inner Warmth Anjali enters a state of inner warmth, regenerating 50% of her health over the next 30 seconds.	Seething Warmth Anjali's Inner Warmth grants her a 25% chance per tick of Seething Warmth to deal damage to enemies when she is attacked in battle.
Spinning Kick Anjali leaps forward with a spinning kick, inflicting 100% of her health in damage.	Rejuvenating Peak When Anjali uses Inner Warmth, she immediately regains 2% of her health per tick of Rejuvenating Peak.

Each ability you unlock has further Proficiencies that add bonus effects.

to collect and use. Balancing out your HP, Agility, Armour and everything else with every new helmet and pair of stockings you retrieve from a dead body or treasure chest. It's an addictive process in most games like this and *Dungeon Siege III* manages to get it spot-on. We spent about as much time in the early part of the game flicking back and forth between the world and our menu screen as we did battling with our enemies. If you had the pleasure of experiencing something similar with *Borderlands* then you will understand what we mean. And like every good looting game should, the items you choose to equip change the appearance of your character.

Getting to meet *Dungeon Siege III*'s next nutcase was as good an excuse as any to keep playing

So, *Dungeon Siege* isn't polished to a high shine, but that doesn't mean it ever feels unfinished. This is a game of humble origins that is holding tight to the classic style of

titles like *Baldur's Gate*. Where BioWare has attempted to update those ideas with *Dragon Age*, Obsidian has held firm and delivered as fine an example of the genre as we've seen on consoles.

As strong an element as anything is the story, which ultimately was what kept us pushing on. Sure, the conversations could be a little stunted and we've talked about the voice acting and characters, but

The superb looking Causeway is your fast travel link between lands and cities.



> the intricacies of the plot can suck you in pretty quickly. The tale of your attempts to resurrect the 10th Legion and bring the kingdom of Ehb together against the evil Jeyne Kassinder has a lot more grey area in it than first appears.

There's no strict good and evil system to the game and no measurement of your moves towards being a rogue or paragon, but those sort of choices do exist and they usually revolve around how you react to the revelations characters lay at your feet. Is the Legion's past too dark to truly serve the people again? Can the monarchy be trusted? Is Kassinder really as bad as your elders made out? Seeing all these questions unfold revealed that while the presentation of *Dungeon Siege III*'s story can leave something to be desired there can be no question of Obsidian's ability to pen a compelling tale.

An important part of that was seeing your party gradually populated with characters. You can play as one of four characters from the beginning as well as adding co-op characters immediately if you're playing with someone else. Otherwise those extra party members will join you later and in a different order depending on who you choose first. As you play through the game, all of the characters level up simultaneously with you. That means that regardless of who you choose as your party member in battle at any given moment, they should all be more or less on a par in terms of the number of abilities they have and their power.

It also means that should someone decide to drop into your game and start playing co-



op with you (locally or online) they will kick off with exactly the same level of character as you and have a full set of abilities to draw from. It's a simple and welcome touch that speaks to the fact Obsidian really wants you playing this game with friends.

Your choice of comrade can affect what you hear and the information you get during the course of the game, too. We spent most of our first playthrough with

Your choice of comrade can affect what you hear and the information you get during the course of the game

Katarina partnered by Anjali and the archon had plenty to say in every new area we visited and during our conversations with NPCs. There is a degree of depth to the conversation system, dialogue trees and the choices you make that we would expect from this sort of game, even if it doesn't run

very deep. A number of decisions we made had a clear consequence in the later stages of our adventure. That should give you some sense of ownership over the story and your character that you won't otherwise get from these pre-written, pre-designed heroes.

It also means that while the over-arching plot will remain the same, there are four quite distinct paths through that story and it is seen in very different ways by each of the four possible heroes. That certainly offers some replay value, as does the fact mentioned earlier

that you play the entirety of the game in co-op with up to three other people on and offline. When you have someone to really co-op with other than just the AI you can combine your abilities and upgrade them in tandem. That's not necessarily something the AI will think to do for you.

Not that the AI is all that bad. It gets on with its business and perhaps most importantly knows how to look after itself. We found ourselves only having to revive our AI partner a handful of times in the whole game, while it was called upon to play medic far more often. It didn't waste any time either getting to us and made good use of its special abilities at all times. All in all we were pleased to have it kicking around with us.

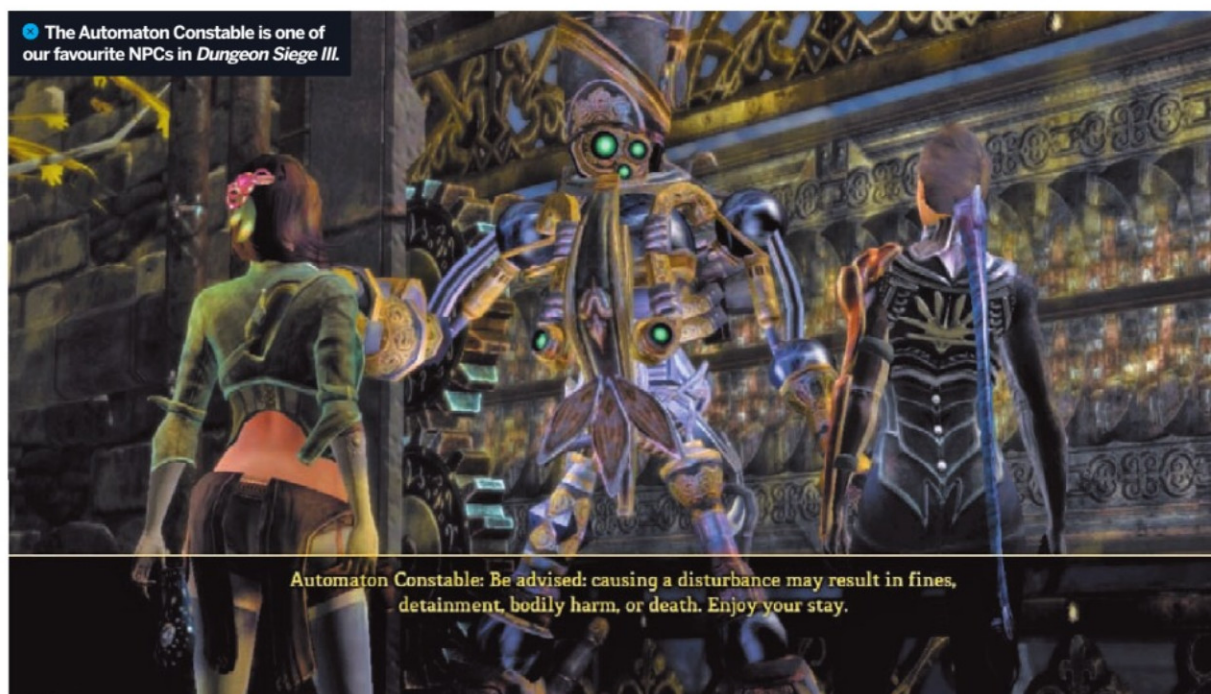
Getting a partnership going with the AI or with a friend that you feel comfortable with is really important. With a total of nine abilities to unlock per character and with each of those being customisable in some way in terms of their secondary effects, there's a fair amount of combat customisation to *Dungeon Siege III*. It's not quite as deep and sprawling as *Dragon Age*, but it's got enough about it to give you some tactical options out in the field.

The enemy AI isn't really much to write home about, though, but what it lacks in brains it makes up for in brute force and numbers. It's interesting how some of the





• The Automaton Constable is one of our favourite NPCs in *Dungeon Siege III*.



Automaton Constable: Be advised: causing a disturbance may result in fines, detainment, bodily harm, or death. Enjoy your stay.

• Watch out for poison and fire attacks as they keep hurting you.



WHAT'S THE LOOT ABOUT?

Can you guess which of these are real pieces of *Dungeon Siege III* loot?



- A. Gloves of Vengeance
- B. Blouse of Quickness
- C. Master Sword Of Knowledge
- D. Heroic Stockings of Rage
- E. Shield Of Eternal Protection
- F. Steadfast Shotgun of Shrapnel
- G. Hollow-point Handcannon of Resolve
- H. Determined Bracer
- I. Lance Of Virtue
- J. Heroic Pants

Answers: A) Real, B) Real, C) Real, D) Fake, E) Real, F) Fake, G) Real, H) Real, I) Real, J) Fake.

smallest enemies in the game were often the most destructive. Ogres and giant robots are slow, lumbering beasts that could kill you in a couple of strikes, but are easy to dodge. It was the pesky grenade-throwing goblins that really hacked us off.

Anyway, much like any boss, every enemy you face has some kind of attack pattern that you can learn and in turn avoid. By throwing lots of different types at you and then placing you in more and more dangerous locations the game keeps up with your ever-improving hero. We didn't really get any sense that these enemies levelled up with us. We were kicking all sorts of beastly behind by the end of the game without breaking a sweat, which is what levelling up your hero should be all about.

In many ways *Dungeon Siege III* feels rather dated and sometimes even limited, but as a package it comes together. It's like

a good B movie. You may see the plot holes and the acting stinks and the special effects are woeful, yet despite yourself it charms you with its one-liners and quirky characters. In bringing this series to consoles it has rounded off some of the edges and simplified certain ideas, which may put off some. *Dragon Age* is clearly the more ambitious game, but in setting its sights slightly lower, Obsidian has created something simpler and yet still involving and engrossing.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Dungeon Siege III doesn't have the pomp and ceremony of a triple-A blockbuster RPG, but it does have charm, solid gameplay and a really fun co-op experience. If you love loot then you want to be a part of this.

80%



• Anjali and Katarina have companions they can summon.



• Painted cut-scenes help show you the consequences of your choices and victories.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

L.A. Noire

Changing the face of videogames forever



DETAILS

Publisher
RockstarDeveloper
Team BondiPrice
£49.99Players
1Genre
Action-AdventureAge Rating
18Website
www.rockstargames.com/lanoireTwitter
@RockstarGamesFacebook
facebook.com/Rockstar-Games

L.A. Noire is a difficult game to review. On the one hand you've got an undeniably rich, polished and progressive title that explores territory that videogames have *never* ventured into before, on the other you've got a game that's somewhat handholding, certainly repetitive, and that occasionally fumbles over its own internal logic. The question that requires answering here is, do the more impressive elements of *L.A. Noire* negate those small, niggling faults? Is *L.A. Noire* a game that's more than merely handsome? Or, like the LA setting itself, is there something uglier residing beneath?

L.A. Noire's City Of Angels is pure James Ellroy. Outwardly beaming with glitz, glamour and the enviable fortunes of Hollywood, this Forties LA hides a sordid underbelly of greed, vice and murder. Fame and wealth go hand-in-hand with crime and corruption. Here, everyone's guilty of something.

You enter this tarnished diamond in the brogues of WWII vet turned LAPD detective Cole Phelps, a straight-laced and self-righteous cop who's nevertheless sincere in his quest for justice. Starting out as a patrolman and working your way up through

the detective ranks at the LAPD you're tasked with solving 21 cases – each taking anywhere between 40 minutes to an hour to complete – and watching the core narrative unfold throughout each as you do so.

L.A. Noire quickly falls into a familiar routine that shares some elements with *Grand Theft Auto* – foot chases, cover-based shoot-outs and open-world driving are all featured – but this is *not* GTA from the other side of the law. The pace is slower, the tempo a gradual burn

L.A. Noire is an experiential game, not a mechanical one, and in viewing it from this perspective it excels

rather than bursts of high-velocity action. If anything *L.A. Noire* can be more accurately likened to *Heavy Rain* or the point-and-click adventures of the Nineties. It's a game of dialogue and lateral thinking, except here your inventory is made up of clues found when scrutinising a crime scene, and the items you use them on are your suspects.

L.A. Noire's structure falls into place early and stays there for the majority of the game. You go to a crime scene and search for clues, further investigate by driving to locations and people of interest, and then usually end in an interrogation room attempting to draw a confession from your prime suspect.

You couldn't be blamed for labelling the experience somewhat repetitive, but the truth is that the seams with which *L.A. Noire* is held together are so well concealed that you barely notice the cyclic succession of events. Team Bondi's dedication to the period setting of Forties LA is so deep and meticulous that every location, case and event feels totally unique. The world is so rich and absorbing in its detail that it's easy to forget that you're

just wandering around a room and picking up items for the umpteenth time.

The cases themselves are well written and often twist unexpectedly, making the underlying structure that governs them all the less obvious. This is all thanks to Team Bondi's facial capture tech MotionScan, which truly does represent every tick, nuance and furrowed brow from an actor's face as realistically in-game as you'd see in real life. What this means is that you use natural

intuition to decipher your interviewee's honesty. Human instinct as a game mechanic? That's certainly something we haven't seen before.

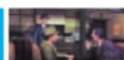
Unfortunately, interrogation scenes aren't always as organic and natural as we'd hoped. For one, it doesn't help that Phelps will occasionally phrase a response in such a way as you didn't intend. At one stage, when interviewing a recently abused 15 year old Phelps shouted at her in a rather callous manner most unbecoming of his character.

But even if you know for certain that an NPC is lying that doesn't mean you'll necessarily select the correct response from the options of Truth, Doubt or Lie. Irrespective of a subject's nervous shifting you'll sometimes find yourself in ambiguous circumstances where the correct responses feel poorly defined. Furthermore, the game's logic can feel arbitrary, particularly when it comes to using evidence to challenge a subject's statement that you feel makes sense but the game refuses to acknowledge.

But these are momentary faults that are pronounced only because for the majority of the game the interrogation scenes are incredibly well constructed and believable. Furthermore, they present a never-before-



● Cole Phelps isn't the best videogame character, but you can't help but relate with him thanks to the facial tech.

Previously...
in Play

PREVIEWED Issue 203

"Team Bondi's project could be a genuine masterpiece, if not completely awe-inspiring."

www.imagineshop.co.uk



❖ *L.A. Noire* is completely straight-faced. There's no room for *GTA*-esque satire here.

seen videogame mechanic that elevates *L.A. Noire* above your standard videogame fare and towards an interactive experience altogether more meaningful and human.

Does this make *L.A. Noire* an important videogame? For some, the recurring nature of the mechanics and the inability to deviate from the game's one narrative will be reason enough to deny *L.A. Noire* such high stature. But for others – we included – *L.A. Noire* is an experiential game, not a mechanical one, and in viewing it from that perspective it excels. It's a mature game, too, delivering dark and macabre content with the same kind of intelligence and respect we would expect from a major television series.

So yes. We'd say *L.A. Noire* is undoubtedly important, because like *Heavy Rain* it's a slightly flawed but nevertheless brave attempt to push the medium into new territory; to move away from the guns and space marines stigma that's plagued the industry for so long. It's a cerebral game where others are visceral, considered and clever rather than fast and stupid. An open-world game that doesn't require you to constantly unholster your weapon. We've mentioned some minor, niggling faults in this review, but *L.A. Noire* won't be remembered for them. It's only ever going to be remembered as a pioneer in its medium. And for many reasons, it truly is.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

There are small faults in *L.A. Noire*'s design, but overall it is a considered, thoughtful and extremely well-put-together game. Whether you agree with the conclusion or not, it's going to be regarded as a pioneer in the field of gaming for some time yet.

91%



❖ The patrolman desk acts as a sort of tutorial.



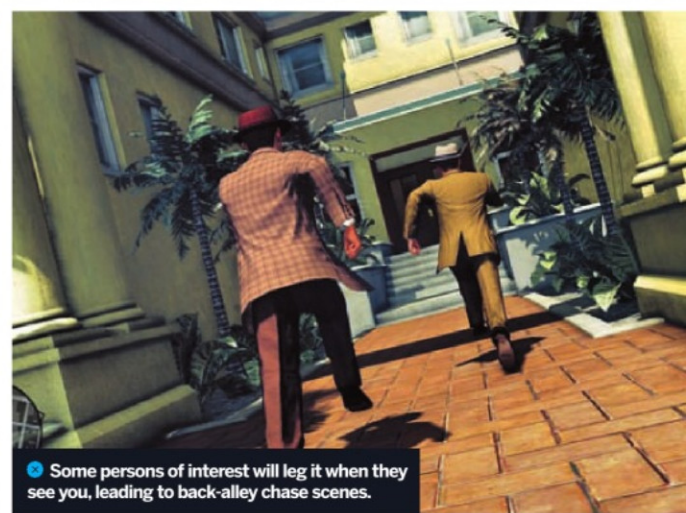
❖ As bodies are mo-capped separately to faces there can sometimes be a disconnect in the performances.

AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

You can't fail a case in *L.A. Noire*, but does it really matter?

WHEN PLAYING *L.A. NOIRE* it's difficult not to think of *Heavy Rain*. But unlike *Heavy Rain*, *L.A. Noire*'s story will play out in largely the same way no matter your actions. It's not a question of success or failure then, but a matter of getting your conviction right. It may

sound handholding, but the sting that accompanies a bad line of questioning is enough to motivate you to become a better detective. Conversely, the satisfaction of squeezing information from an interrogatee is such that you'll want to experience it time and again.



❖ Some persons of interest will leg it when they see you, leading to back-alley chase scenes.



A NEW P.O.I.
Murder Victim
NEW OBJECTIVE
Investigate Downtown Crime Scene

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

DiRT 3

Codemasters hits pay dirt

PS3 Earlier this year, in *Gran Turismo 5*, Kazunori Yamauchi and Polyphony Digital explored the microscopic aspects of racing, examining with greater depth than ever before the differences a slightly angled spoiler or lowered ride height could make to a vehicle's cornering ability or top speed. But *DiRT 3*, like its predecessors, is about a completely different facet of the racing experience.

DiRT 3 is about taking a rickety old Sixties-era Mini Cooper S onto the sub-baked tracks of Kenya, slamming its shuddery frame around elevated bends and watching the mud and soil spray across the warm bask of an orange sunset. It's about getting behind the wheel of a Subaru Impreza and speeding it dangerously around the mud-caked corners

of a coniferous forest. It's about the smell of hot petrol and burning rubber. *DiRT 3* is a game less concerned with the minutiae of racing and more with its bracing, grimy side – the tearing and ripping and chewing of gears, the mud and the soil and sweat and tears. It's a racing game as far removed from the speedy and scalpel-precise racing of Codemasters' *F1 2010* as imaginable.

But it's not one too far removed from 2009's *Colin McRae: DiRT 2*. In fact, you

wouldn't be blamed for mistaking *DiRT 3* for the same game, even two years after the fact. The flashy, festival-inspired front end has been replaced by a tessellating menu of triangles, and gymkhana events add a new element of score-chasing, combo-based gameplay, but overall this title feels little removed from the game it follows.

Which isn't necessarily a bad thing. *DiRT 2* nailed that sweet spot between arcade thrills and the demands of simulation racing, and *DiRT 3* refines that model even further. Suspension has been improved, and the centre of gravity on vehicles has been slightly raised, meaning weight shifts feel more

You'll feel both petrol and adrenaline pumping as you roar through forests at 90-plus mph

realistic when throwing cars into corners or attempting to wriggle out of a spin.

Your connection to the track feels more tactile than ever, instilling races with a visceral intensity and demanding careful control of your vehicle, but without ever spilling over into the kind of meticulous braking and acceleration Yamauchi demands of his players. *DiRT 3*'s gameplay finds an almost perfect harmony of arcade and simulation, surpassing perhaps even Bizarre's *Project*



The in-car view really heightens the intensity of races.



DETAILS

Publisher
Codemasters
Developer
Codemasters
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
12
Website
www.codemasters.com/dirt
Twitter
@DiRT3game
Facebook
facebook.com/dirt3game

Gotham Racing series – the previous master of the art.

As for the structure of the game, there's not a lot here that stands out from the competition, and certainly nothing that could hold a flame to *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit's* Autolog system. You compete in various events, earning Rep as you go to unlock more courses. There are well over a hundred routes here, which is a vast improvement over the rather disappointing 41 routes in *DiRT 2*, although you might feel you visit similar locations a bit too often.

The new gymkhana events (one of the few new additions to *DiRT 3*'s single-player) break up the pace, testing your ability to offset the power and force of your vehicle with finesse and poise in complex obstacle courses. Stunts like 360-degree spins, donuts, drifts and jumps must be combined to rack up your score and multiplier – it's a bit like playing *Tony Hawk's* except you're in car rather than on a skateboard.

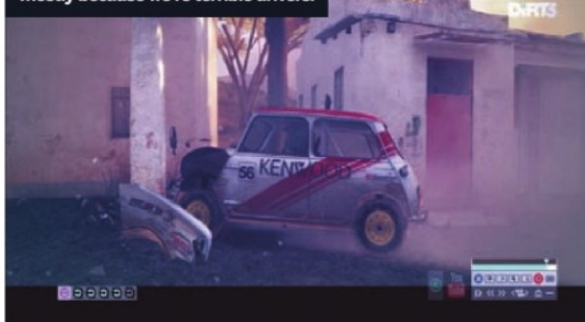
What's brilliant about the gymkhana events is that they take the very thing that forms the core of *DiRT 3* – its handling model – and creates an entire mode around it. The pinnacle of motorsport expression, the gymkhana events demand complete mastery over your vehicle's handling – they're certainly not easy, and only the most skilled of drivers will find themselves landing the top spot.

Leaning more to the fun side is the DC Compound at London's Battersea Power Station – a personal freestyle playground that allows players to explore your vehicle's abilities as you wish, while challenges such as 'find all the hidden packages' or 'perform a 180-degree spin midair' prod you towards achieving goals. It's a less structured and freeform inclusion that helps to break up the pace of the tour mode, but also quietly





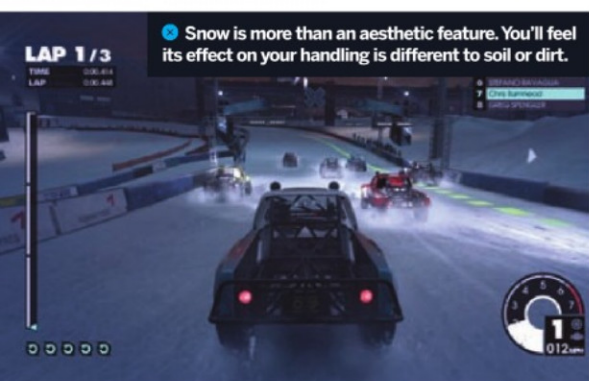
• We still love the Flashback feature, mostly because we're terrible drivers.



PEP RALLY

This is what's 'down with the kids' today, right?

ALTHOUGH THE X-GAMES inspired front end has been replaced by something classier, *DiRT 3* still feels as Americanised a take on rally as *DiRT 2*. This isn't the kind of thermos-and-kagool experience that typifies UK rally, but a flashy and urban take on the motorsport that's become far more popular as of late. Even the Colin McRae name has been dropped, and Californian rally driver Ken Block instead takes the central role. You'll also be subjected to plenty of talking, with your race team commentating over the game's menus to irritating effect, blabbing about things being 'off the hook' or, at one point, making a joke about testicles. Still, as irksome as it is, these snippets of dialogue give the game some personality that would otherwise be lacking.



• Snow is more than an aesthetic feature. You'll feel its effect on your handling is different to soil or dirt.



• Gymkhana events are about precision, dexterity and... smashing things to pieces.

informs players how to manoeuvre and control their vehicles without the need for an explicit tutorial.

So, while *DiRT 3* may not be hugely different to its predecessor, it's nevertheless a meticulously designed and welcome iteration. Let's not beat around the bush – there are disappointments. The introduction of snow and ice doesn't add a great deal other than lots of white terrain, and there's less of the grandness and imagination we saw in *DiRT 2*'s track design.

But what remains in abundance is that desire to push yourself; to etch off those last few milliseconds from your time; to feel both petrol and adrenaline pumping as you churn mud, soil and snow under your wheels and roar through Norwegian forests at 90-

plus mph. *DiRT 3* may not have Autolog or racetracks that explode as you race through them, but it does prove that you don't necessarily need such ideas to make a great racing game. All you have to do is get the fundamentals right; and few games get them as spot-on as *DiRT 3*.

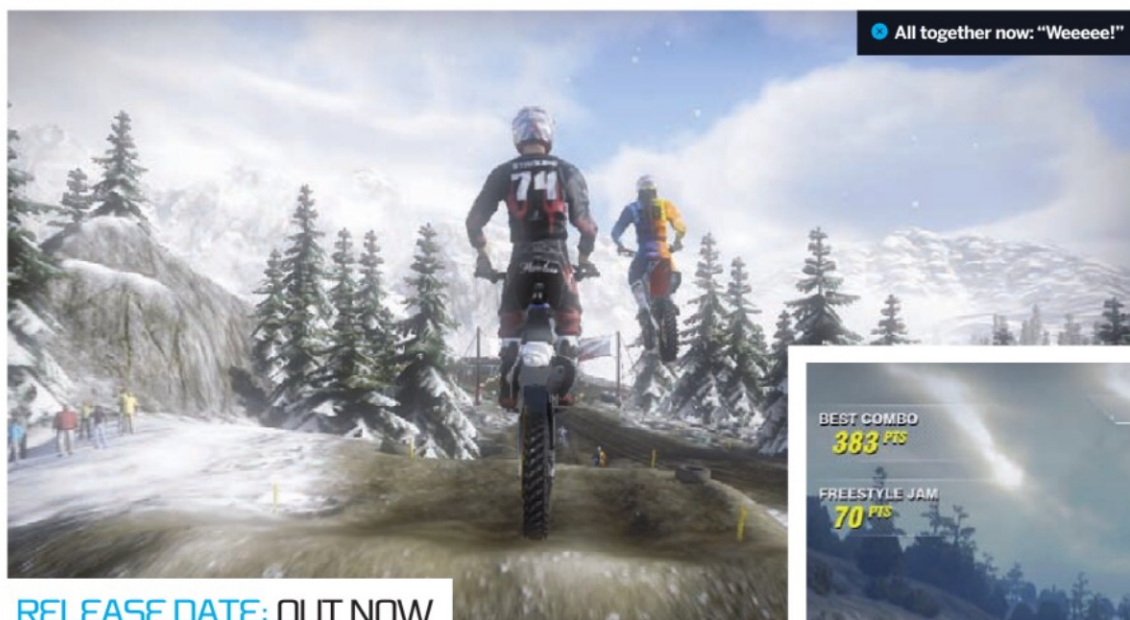
Chris McMahon

VERDICT

DiRT 3 may not be a huge departure from *DiRT 2*, but the handling model and intensity of racing are as solid as ever. If you're too hardcore for arcade but too casual for simulation, *DiRT 3*'s masterful balancing of both styles makes it the game for you.

85%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

MX Vs ATV: Alive

Half a half-decent game



DETAILS

Publisher
THQ
Developer
THQ Digital Studio
Phoenix
Price
£29.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
12
Website
www.mxvsatv.com
Twitter
@MXvsATV
Facebook
facebook.com/
THQInsider



Unless this experiment in releasing a budget product and topping it up with paid DLC sees some major, *major* changes, we hope for nothing but failure in its immediate future. It is a horrible way of doing things and presents players with a hugely stripped-down package for £30. *MX Vs ATV: Alive* doesn't even have a career or tournament mode available on the disc. No, you have to pay extra for that luxury.

This means you are left with 16 tracks and two free ride areas to play individually, finishing with one, exiting to the main menu then selecting another. Oh, but of course they aren't all unlocked from the start – fair enough, it's good to have carrots at the end of any sticks you're propping in front of us. But these carrots are really far away and your method of getting to them involves crawling over broken glass in nothing but your pants. Level 10 is the first point where more than four actual racing tracks will be unlocked.

It doesn't even have a career or tournament mode available on the disc

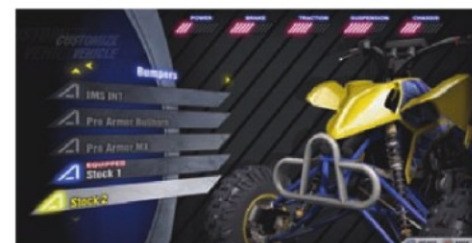
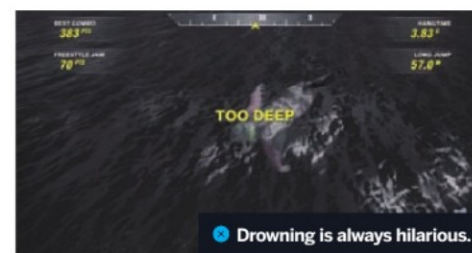
Therefore to get to level 10, players are forced to repeat the same four races or simply dick about in free mode for hours on end until a handful more tracks are unlocked. Then it's the same again, for lesser rewards, up to level 25. Granted, this would be made a bit more fun in multiplayer, but you'll still be playing the same tracks,

the same few vehicles, with some different stickers on your bike.

It's awfully slow, plodding progress and absolutely is not rationed out well at all.

But maybe that's because you'll be expected to buy your progress in the game. A few quid here, a few quid there. Nothing wrong with that, right? No, not until the initial outlay of 30 quid soon becomes 50 quid. 60 quid. 80 quid.

However much it will end up costing for the 'full' package, it's almost guaranteed to be more than how much *Alive* would cost



were it a full-price release. You can see why we want this approach to die the horrible death it deserves.

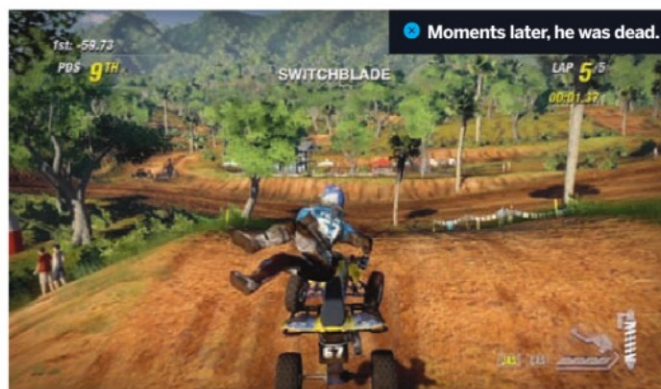
Oh yeah, the game. *Alive* is another MX/ATV game, meaning it's off-road nonsense done worse than *Pure* did it a few years ago. Track deformation and the reflex system return from last year's game, but there's nothing of real interest new, and absolutely no reason to buy this half-game unless you're an obsessive MX and ATV type.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

A bold experiment, but one that ends up being a heap of cynical, misjudged half-game. Serious thought needs to be put into this approach, or it needs to be abandoned for fear of damaging even more originally decent games.

42%



In this series



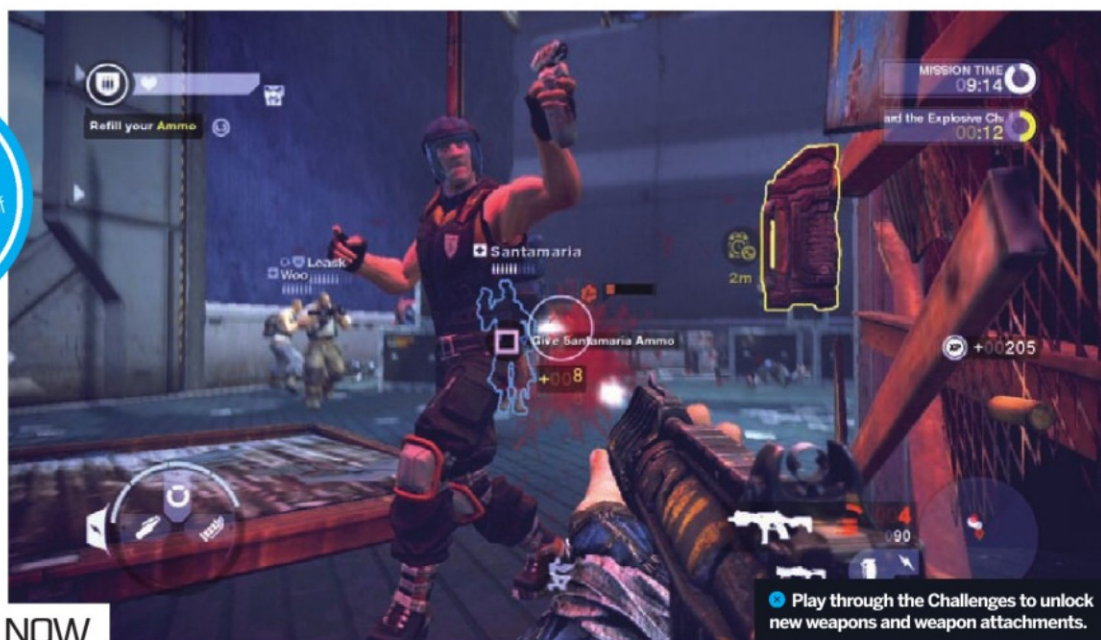
MX Vs ATV: Reflex Issue 189
Better than *Untamed*, but still not great. **68%**

Single-player is a good place for you to find out which class you like best.



Read More!
Head to page 92 to see what we think of *Brink* online.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Play through the Challenges to unlock new weapons and weapon attachments.



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda
Developer
Splash Damage
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Shooter
Age Rating
16
Website
brinkthegame.com
Twitter
@BrinkGame
Facebook
facebook.com/
brinkthegame



Attempting to judge any online-focused game for its offline functionality alone is often a soul-withering task. It is far too easy to fall into the trap of believing that what doesn't seem to work offline is going to haunt you online. With *Brink* we didn't really get that problem at all.

While in single-player it is sorely lacking, it was easy to spot the ways in which real-life players

would improve virtually every aspect of this very fresh-feeling FPS.

The thing is that every map and mission in this game can and should be played online as well as offline. The story (what there is of

it) in single-player is the same story online. Your objectives are the same. The weapons and abilities you unlock and earn carry over into both. The game makes no distinction between the two. That makes playing alone an excellent way to gain experience in a real world sense as well as XP. It doesn't

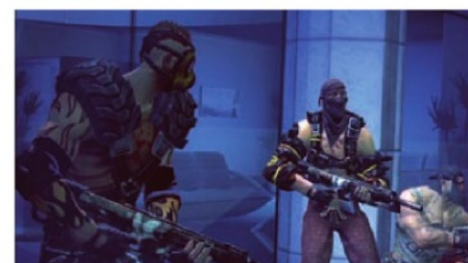
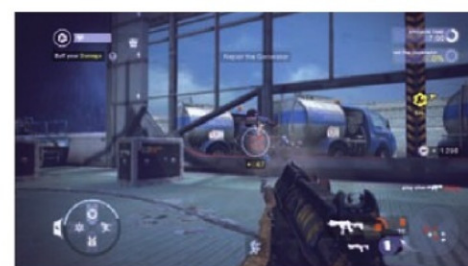
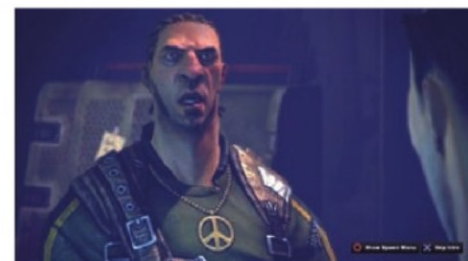
You can get a sense of the minute-to-minute gunplay being something special with the right group of friends

necessarily offer you any satisfying solo time, though. The word grind springs to mind.

The two campaigns, each one featuring eight missions, offer a good few hours of gaming depending on the difficulty setting and your skill level and while there is a story we wouldn't really say it was much of one. There are cut-scenes at the beginning and end of a mission, but real stories are made through set pieces and the introduction of brand-new ideas and objectives. *Brink*'s objectives are always the same just in greater or lesser number with each mission. That makes sense in the chaos of a team shooter, but leaves for an incomplete feeling playing alone.

What you do get to experience, though, is how brilliantly balanced and paced the game is thanks to its class system, its weapon selection and the SMART system that brings all the best elements of running around in *Mirror's Edge* with the added bonus of finding a good sniping position as a result. You can get a sense of the minute-to-minute gunplay being something special with the right group of friends (or enemies).

You don't get that necessarily minute-to-minute against the AI, which we found to be rather lacking on occasion. While your partner AI will seem fairly useful (healing, buffing and hacking) we found ourselves having to leap into the action to keep



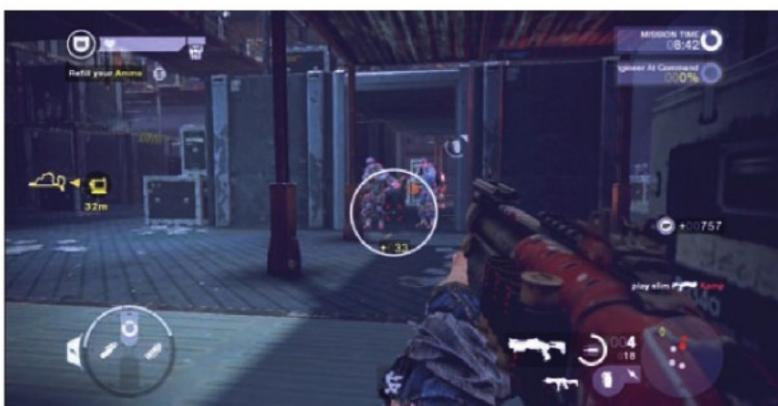
the mission moving on a few occasions. Meanwhile it was not unusual to see enemies looking around for something to shoot when you were right next to them. Not brilliant, but they do manage to replicate the feeling of a proper online match to some extent and that shouldn't be knocked.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Brink really isn't intended as something for you to play on your own, but if you insist on it there's still a fair amount on offer here to enjoy. Just don't expect it to feel like a whole, finished experience. For that you need to be online.

67%



The art style means that every character looks pretty cool regardless of what you do to them.

Previously...
in Play



PREVIEWED Issue 204
"This could well make the question of whether *Left 4 Dead* comes to PS3 rather redundant."



● Thor's mighty hammer should have made for a much better weapon than this.



● The barge sections sum up everything that's bad about vehicle sections in action games.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Thor: God Of Thunder

DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Liquid Entertainment
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Age Rating
16
Website
www.sega.com/thor
Twitter
@Sega
Facebook
facebook.com/sega

You'd be Thor too if you had to be in this game



Approaching a game like this is always best done with caution, but with an open mind. After all, one of these days someone is going to make a movie tie-in close to the release of the film and get it right. It must be possible. One of these summer blockbusters is going to arrive on our consoles as something more than an annoyance. Unfortunately *Thor* isn't it.

And it is unfortunate. Somewhere in here is all the good intentions and imagination Liquid Entertainment thought it could bring to this licensed title, which tells some of the story leading up to the events of Marvel's *Thor* movie. All the major gameplay ideas are drawn from the likes of *God Of War*. Some big enemies, some small enemies, some combos and some QTEs. All the boxes

ticked. Then you've some RPG trappings of upgrading abilities and unlocking new moves. All perfectly pleasant on the surface.

However, none of this is worth a damn if you can't make the game work in someone's hands. If the attacks are slow and unresponsive you're not going to encourage extended play. There were too many occasions where timed blocks or extended combos failed because the game couldn't keep up or failed to register our inputs. We had much the same trouble with jumping, which is less of a concern because there are few platform sections, but what few there are were infuriating as hell.

And then you have to fight enemies as dull as a margarita pizza. You're basically set

against the same two types of enemies in every new environment you visit. You've got small guys who can be grabbed and killed and you've got big guys who you can only grab after dusting them up a bit first followed by a quick-time event. It's just various

You'll find no joy in smiting these pitiful excuses for minions

combinations of that over and over and over with different skins on them. You'll find no joy in smiting these pitiful excuses for minions.

Which brings us to the only other thing you need to fight, the bosses, and once again we found them wanting. As an example, we're pretty sure we defeated Ymir, the first boss you face, four times in a row; once in his chamber and then three more times below it in-between opening a door. Repeating boss fights is one thing, but that was ridiculous and frankly it didn't get any better after that.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Everything that you probably expected and less. Liquid gets points for a solid setting and some nice RPG elements, but combat and enemies this poor should be outlawed.

38%



● Thor's powers aren't too bad, but you never feel very connected to them.

Or you could try



God Of War Issue 190
Myths, monsters and gods with magic weapons and an angry lead. Sound familiar? 88%



● We refuse to refer to any part of a Lego game as 'a puzzle', but there are plenty of hidden objectives to complete.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean: The Video Game

The good ship licensing sails ever onward...



DETAILS

Publisher
Disney
Developer
Traveller's Tales
Players
1-2
Genre
Action
Age Rating
7
Website
www.lego.com/
piratesofthecaribbean
Twitter
@Disney
Facebook
on.fb.me/ih11Tg



You can say what you like about the ever-expanding procession of Lego games to emerge from the production line at Traveller's Tales – that they're generic, unimaginative or mind-numbingly similar in gameplay terms – but you can't fault the developer's attention to detail. Its ability to render iconic characters and re-create classic scenes never stops impressing, the unique character of each licence it tackles standing head and shoulders above a basic smash-and-jump template that really ought to be less enjoyable than it is by now.

This instalment covers the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* movies – all four of them – which means that Traveller's Tales has mostly spent its time since its last release re-creating desert islands, colonial ports and pirate ships, and jolly nice they all look as a result. In fact, considering the high quality of the many silent cinematic cut-scenes packed into its

20 levels, *POTC* is probably the most visually accomplished Lego title to see release so far.

Nonetheless, there's no getting around the fact that, if you've ever come into contact with a Lego game before, you'll know what to expect here; each level hits upon a memorable event from the films, and is populated by familiar celebrities rendered with just a few

caricatured brush strokes. Each level follows a singular path, which requires either one or two players to

put up with a few nigglesome camera angles as they smash up everything in their path to collect Lego studs. Every level opens up new characters from the series, which can then be taken into Free Play mode and the main hub world and swapped between at will in order to rinse each location for all its secrets. Not much has changed, aside from the addition of Captain Jack's magic compass, which brings eight hidden locations to each stage and buries them under a big 'X'.

Probably the most visually accomplished Lego title

However, nobody plays Lego games expecting to be taken aback by their originality; they're safe, charming platformers at heart – the sort of games Rare would be making if it hadn't become lost in the corporate machine – and it's that Traveller's Tales attention to detail that really shines through, from Johnny Depp's drunken swagger to the enormous block-pixel tentacles of *Dead Man's Chest's* Kraken. On these terms, *Lego POTC* proves a charming experience, and stands as a good substitute for any other game in the series.

Mat Hoddy

VERDICT

Orlando Bloom is more tolerable without the terrible line delivery, and the entire world is brimming with references to the films. Only the camera issues and a lack of originality hold *Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean* back from being essential.

76%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise

Travis touches down on PS3 in typically silly style



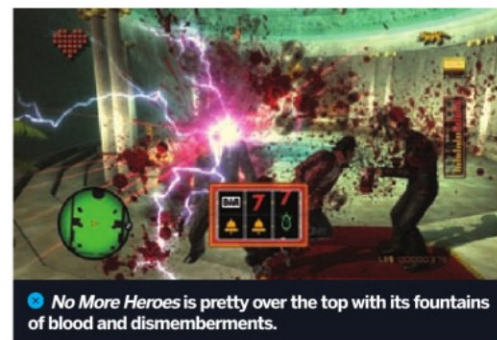
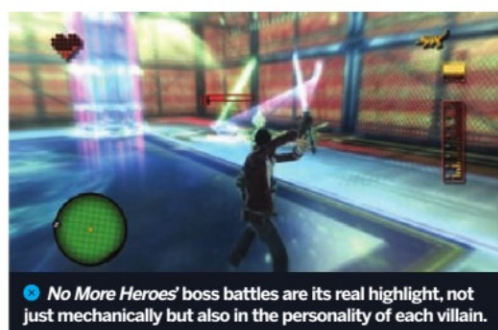
PS3

First released for Nintendo's Wii in 2008 then later redone in high definition for the Japanese PlayStation and Xbox 360, *No More Heroes* has finally arrived on the European PlayStation 3, and this third version also happens to be the definitive one.

Some of the upgrades you will find in *Heroes' Paradise* are common sense. The

high-definition visuals, for example, bring out the best from the heavily stylised comic-book visuals of the original. While some are frivolous, such as the new Very Sweet difficulty mode that redresses all the female stars in much more revealing clothing. Others, like the PlayStation Move compatibility that authentically re-creates the control of the Wii original, are so essential that you have to wonder if anyone even bothered to play the non-Move compatible version that Japan got. Throw in some optional new sequences that pit you against five of the bosses from the 2010 sequel, *Desperate Struggle*, and you have the single best version of one of the few action

The high-definition visuals bring out the best from the heavily stylised comic-book visuals of the original



DETAILS

Publisher

Konami

Developer

AQ Interactive/
Grasshopper

Manufacture

Price

£44.99

Players

1

Genre

Action

Age Rating

18

Website

www.konami.com/

games/nomoreheroes

Twitter

@NMHofficial

Facebook

facebook.com/no-more-heroes

heroes

games to legitimately turn the heads of the PlayStation 3 faithful.

There are tons of tiny improvements in addition to all of these broad new features, but the most important thing about *Heroes' Paradise* is that it retains everything that was great about the original game. With as much personality and memorable characters as a Hideo Kojima game and the fast-paced action of a Shinji Mikami production, it's almost the ultimate OTT Japanese game.

With a plot centred around the ludicrously named Travis Touchdown, an anime geek who wins a 'beam katana' in an online auction and sets off on a murderous quest to become the world's number one assassin, you expect *No More Heroes* to be as insane as games get, and it doesn't disappoint. The beam katana combat is fast and exciting, and makes great use of motion control to add a satisfying finishing move to the end of each fight as you either slice an enemy into an explosion of blood

and flesh or wrestle them into the concrete. It makes for a game that's tough enough to be rewarding and accessible enough that you can easily get to the end and see all the crazy stuff the game has to offer. Which is what's really good about *No More Heroes*. There are so many brilliant characters, so many quotable lines and just so much affection for the inherent silliness of its medium that it'll remind you why you fell in love with videogames to begin with.

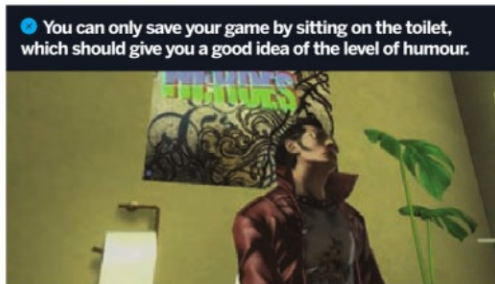
If you've played the Wii game before then you'll already know this, of course, but there's just enough new content and improvements here that you'll enjoy playing it all over again. And if you're new to *No More Heroes*, then you're in for one hell of a ride.

Ashley Day

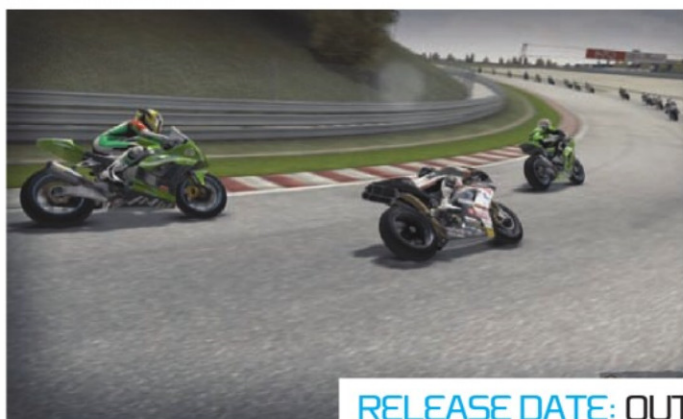
VERDICT

A modern hardcore classic gets a new lick of paint and tons of new features. If you live and breathe for over the top Japanese craziness then *No More Heroes* should be at the top of your wish list.

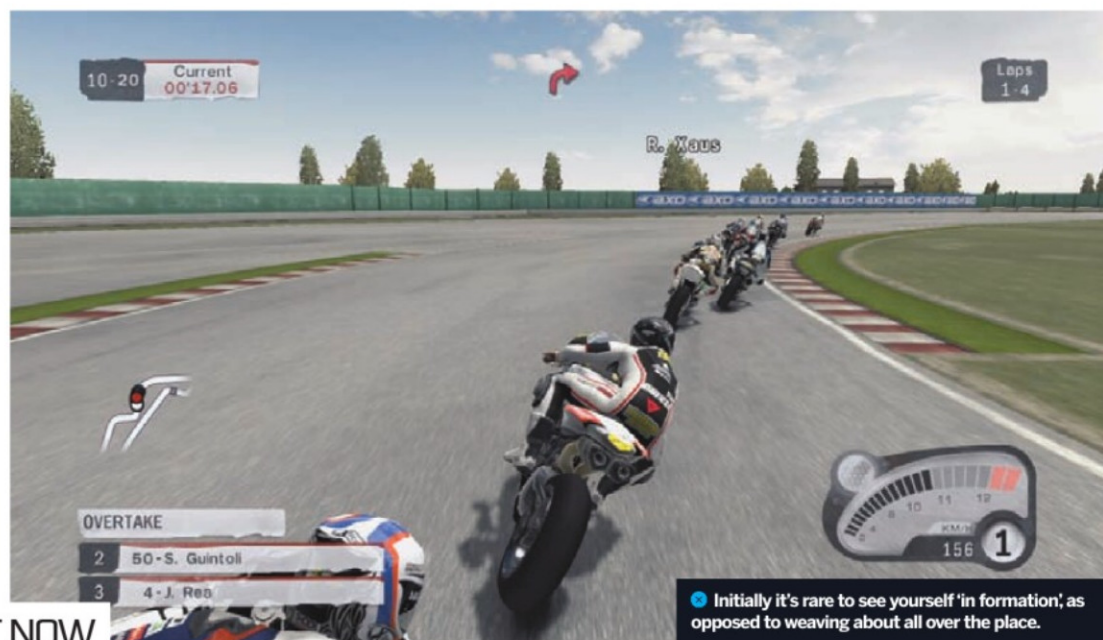
89%



killer7 Issue 131
Grasshopper's original weird-'em-up is still an essential game. 68%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Initially it's rare to see yourself 'in formation', as opposed to weaving about all over the place.



DETAILS

Publisher

Black Bean

Developer

Milestone

Price

£39.99

Players

1-16

Genre

Racing

Age Rating

3

Website

www.sbkthegame.com

Twitter

@Tradewest

Facebook

on.fb.me/dmfgC0

SBK 2011

The difference is this one goes up to '11



When responsible for yearly iterations of licensed game series, some developers and publishers will try and draw you back each year with new features and gimmicks. But not Milestone and Black Bean. Their aims with the *SBK* series are far more modest and honest. Each year they update the stats and rosters and likenesses and make the simulation just a bit better. And this year is no exception.

So if you've played an *SBK* game before you'll be familiar with the formula used to develop *SBK 2011*. Presentation is sparse, technical flair minimal and gimmicks non-existent. You get a choice of simulation modes, plus the *SBK Tour* mode, which presents a more quickfire way to progress with a series of brief skill challenges. There are

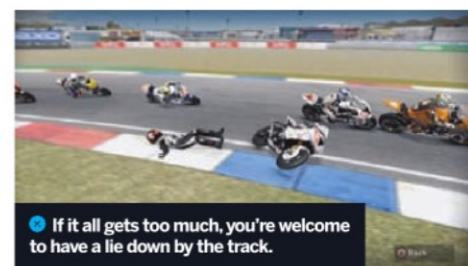
no frills, but the simulation at the heart of it all is solid and Milestone's genuine passion for motorsport shines through despite the limited production budget.

It's hard to stamp out exactly what *2011*'s improvements are, as it's more about the overall feel than anything specific, but this is perhaps the first *SBK* title to cross the threshold between being a series only hardcore Superbike fans could appreciate, to one that a broader range of racing fans can enjoy. Just.

The key is in the quality and balance of the simulation. There are no fancy effects or audiovisual filters to intensify your ride. Instead excitement levels are dependent on how realistic the bikes feel. A long, but smooth learning curve must be assailed before you can race like a pro, but *SBK 2011* isn't so unforgiving as to punish harshly for slight errors, even on full sim settings. Impatient, clumsy control will produce wobbles and slides, but you have to get really careless to completely lose control. On the other hand, you really have to be bang on the money to ride an elegant, high-speed racing line.

SBK 2011 isn't without flaws, though. While the physics governing the weight of the bike and its traction are excellent, collisions are far less consistent. In particular it seems far too easy for an AI opponent to fishtail you from behind, where they all exhibit rigid road holding should you do the same to them. The only time we saw AI riders come off was when they were hit by our airborne bike after we'd been fishtailed. We can forgive collisions not being 100 per cent realistic but the inconsistent sensitivity of the player's bike compared to the AIs' is annoying and had us reaching for the rewind feature, only to discover *SBK 2011* doesn't have one.

Visually it's no oil painting either, although there is some decent attention to detail, particularly when it comes to the bikes. As a whole, *SBK 2011*'s not ugly, it just looks old



If it all gets too much, you're welcome to have a lie down by the track.

and bland. The sound is pretty bad, though. We pray for a day when a game developer figures out how to make motorbikes roar, as opposed to whine. That day has not yet come, and playing *SBK 2011* is akin to having a mosquito using a hairdryer in your ear hole.

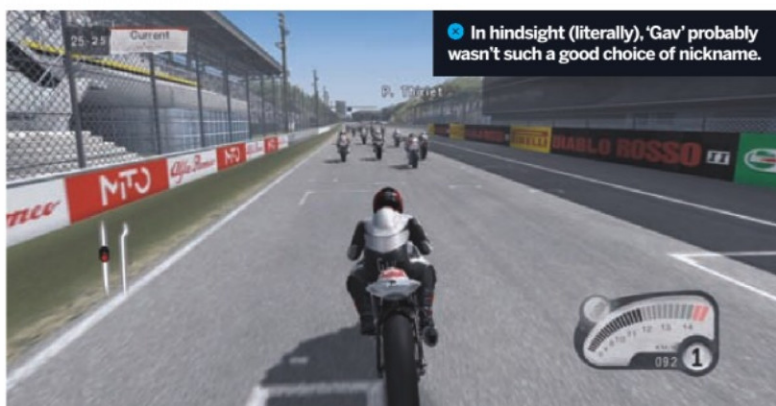
So if you're a Superbike fan, here's your latest Superbike game. If you're a fan of the series you'll like this one, unless you're naively expecting some revolutionary differences this year. It's a bit better, but it's not especially different. If you're not a Superbike fan, but you are a hardcore racing gamer looking to expand your collection into the two-wheeled arena then *SBK 2011* might just be worth a punt. If the slow, steady mastering of some hard but fair handling physics is your idea of fun, then it really is quite good.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

A little bit better than the last one and a little bit better than *MotoGP 10/11*, thanks to better simulation physics and a more rewarding learning curve. Shame it's still so basic and bland.

70%



In hindsight (literally), 'Gav' probably wasn't such a good choice of nickname.



The pre-race montages heighten your anticipation with real-life footage of visor wiping.

Or you could try



MotoGP 10/11 Issue 204
It's shinier, fuller featured and has better bikes than *SBK*, but the handling's awkward and annoying. **64%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable

Persona est grata



Persona 3 Portable – that's this game, not the original version – originally came out in Japan back in November of 2009. You will surely realise, if you're paying attention, that this is a hell of a long time ago. Even American gamers got the bloody thing in July of 2010. It's therefore a safe assumption to make that if you have any standing interest in the *Shin Megami Tensei* series at all you've already given this a look, if not bought it. Which leaves us in a rather interesting position for these two pages of

Persona 3 Portable distances itself from your more traditional JRPGs in a few ways

review right here – though at the same time it means we get the luxury of trying to lure in potential newcomers to the series with our delicious, sexy words. Or something.

An update to the original PS2 version of *Persona 3*, or a remake if you want, *Persona 3 Portable* sees a few changes to the original. These are the kind of changes that make sense and make the whole experience less of a chore – no aimless running around, instead with most exploration being simple and menu-based. Smaller changes like extra save points and the ability to work part-time jobs, thus earning a bit more Yen and increasing social stats, have also been added. There are a number of other differences that we've likely overlooked, but they're the kind of things only pertinent to fans of the original – and as we said, you're the people who've probably bought the game already.

Persona 3 Portable distances itself from your more traditional JRPGs in a few ways. While battles are generally the turn-based, reasonably strategic affairs we know and love



DETAILS

Publisher

Ghostlight

Developer

Atlus

Price

£29.99

Players

1

Genre

RPG

Age Rating

12

Website

www.atlusc.com/p3p

Twitter

@Ghostlightgames

Facebook

on.fb.me/lfvXfu

(or hate, if you're like that) and the story is generally incomprehensible babble, there are some interesting elements that make the game stand out. There's an underlying life simulation aspect to the game, meaning players can build relationships with others, join school clubs, go shopping and a few other elements. Far from being pointless timesinks, they actually offer tangible in-game rewards in the shape of better abilities and access to more Personas (think *Final Fantasy's* summons and you're on the right track).

It takes a while to get to your first battle, and even longer to get to the first dungeon, but once it hits these areas *Persona 3 Portable* becomes far more recognisable to the JRPG faithful. Dungeon exploring is easy to dip in and out of, and progression rarely hits a brick wall – though grinding is sometimes required of the player, unfortunately. Each floor of the dungeon is randomly generated, though this doesn't really amount to much – more just slightly different searching for a staircase each time – but it does at least mean you're less likely to get bored that quickly. Combat is simple enough to get into and offers enough depth to keep you interested through the dozens of hours *Persona 3 Portable* takes to work through, and the ability to control your whole party (it was AI control only in *Persona 3*) is another small change that just makes sense.

If you're looking for an obligatory story paragraph then we won't let you down. In fact, we'll just go quote the late, great Tim Empey (he's not dead) who reviewed *Persona 3's* initial release on PS2, back in issue 162 of *Play*: "Okay, so you play this silent school kid who, upon arriving at a new school, experiences something called the 'dark hour' where everyone in the world – bar a select few – is placed in a coffin at





Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable



the stroke of midnight. During this hour the world is attacked by demons and it's up to the few humans awake to fight the demons by shooting themselves in the head. Once the hour is up everything returns to normal and then you get to go to school. You even get to take some exams." We miss you, Tim.

Surprisingly, the preceding paragraph is indeed accurate. While there are some small differences between the male and female protagonists, the general story is pretty much the same thing. A bit mental, in other words. Social interactions differ whether you choose the male or female protagonist, mind you, meaning relationships can develop differently depending on who you choose to play as. But yeah, it's all thoroughly ignorable.

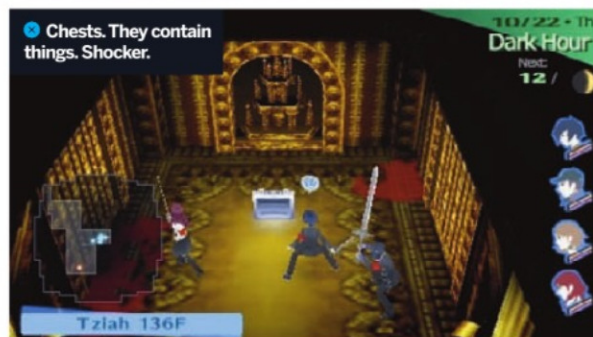
Like we said earlier on here, you've probably already picked up *Persona 3* at some point if you have any interest in it. Those who are going in blind, though? Well you've got yourself a deep JRPG with a handful of elements that are actually a bit different from what you might be used to. Combined with the solid foundation of a good battle system, the constant promise of new Personas to play about with and randomly generated dungeons that can easily soak up hours you have yourself a game that's easy enough to recommend. And not once have we made mention of 'dusting off' your PSP.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

The story is absolute bobbins and depending on your viewpoint you might consider the grind to be a pointless waste of time. Oh, and we had to wait years for it to come out. Still, if you haven't got it already then *Persona 3 Portable* is definitely worth a look.

78%

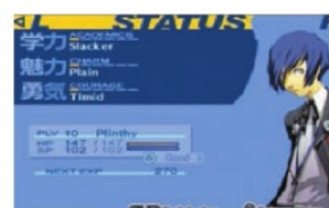
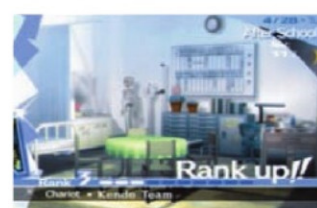


LEARN SOME SOCIAL SKILLS

Drinking coffee is charming, it seems

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S social interactions and behaviour inside and outside of school is reflected by three stats - academics, charm and courage. Don't fall asleep in class and listen to the teacher, your academics will increase. Drink the 'special' tea in the coffee shop, your charm goes

up. Punch someone in the face in an after-school sports club and your courage may go up. It all contributes to rewards elsewhere, from opening up a few new areas to unlocking new potential relationships (and thus new Personas). It seems silly, but can be maddeningly addictive.





DETAILS

Publisher
PQube
Developer
Acquire
Price
£24.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Action-RPG
Age Rating
18
Website
www.aksysgames.com/games/gb/
Twitter
@PQubeGames
Facebook
facebook.com/GladiatorBegins



Story is told through text dialogue scenes. It's completely ignorable.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Gladiator Begins

No. We're not that entertained



Being a gladiator must have sucked. Day-in-day-out these Roman warriors were forced to take part in battles against their will. *Gladiator Begins* gets this aspect of being a gladiator spot-on.

It's not that there's anything hugely wrong with the game – it's a so-so brawler with

action-RPG elements similar to those in *Colosseum: Road To Freedom* on PS2. The main problem is it's just so drearily repetitive.

In attempting to pay your way out of slavery you fight in a host of arena-based battles, gaining XP and coin that can be used to level up your character and purchase new items and abilities. The combat is based around the four face buttons, with each corresponding to your two arms and low and high attacks. The concept is that you must focus your attacks on different parts of your opponent's body in order to disarm them and steal their weapons, but ultimately you'll ignore such strategy and button bash because it's easier to do so.

All the game's good ideas seem to be buried, such as a meter that reflects your

audience's level of entertainment and a nifty upgrade system. However, the arenas are bland, the combat swings wildly between being too hard and too easy and the Wi-Fi multiplayer feels like an afterthought. There are better brawlers out there on PSP. Don't waste your time with this one.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Gladiatorial combat was one of the Roman Empire's most exhilarating and popular bloodsports. Unfortunately, in *Gladiator Begins* it's about as exciting as a game of bowls. A thumbs down, we're afraid.

52%



DETAILS

Publisher
City Interactive
Developer
In-house
Price
£39.99
Players
1-12
Genre
First-person shooter
Age Rating
16
Website
www.sniperghostwarrior.com
Twitter
@SniperTheGame
Facebook
facebook.com/SniperGhostWarrior

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

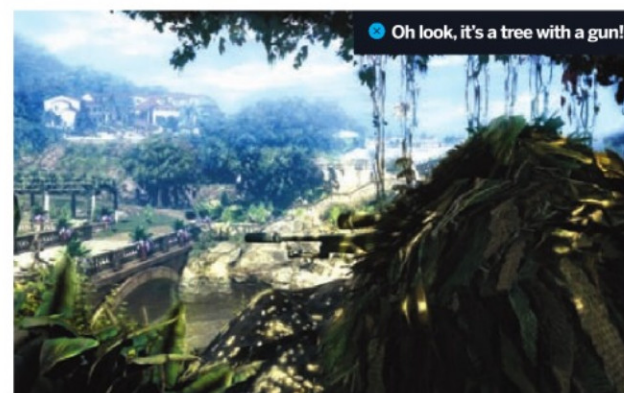
Sniper: Ghost Warrior

Over there... in them trees... I seeee yooooou...



Sniper: Ghost Warrior is an interesting concept, but one that never actually follows through with much of its promises. Yes, you get to snipe, yes, physics come into play and, yes, it's arguably a bit more simulation-y than other FPS titles. But you can play it like a standard FPS if you can't be bothered doing it properly, nullifying the whole concept in one fell swoop. You can have fun, sometimes, but there's too much bad for it to come recommended.

Aside from the entire premise falling apart as soon as you pick up a machine gun, the game is also a big, glitchy bunch of mess. Sound oftentimes doesn't tip enemies off to your location. Guns and enemies sometimes end up hovering in midair. Graphically it's all over the place (though usually bad). It's just lacking in many, many areas and the refit we were promised for the PS3 version really doesn't seem to have been worth the wait.



Oh look, it's a tree with a gun!



As we all know, helicopters are great for stealth...



Honesty time: it looks nowhere near as good as this in-game.

As a slightly cheaper release, *Sniper: Ghost Warrior* falls flat. It feels cheap, the work done to improve the PlayStation 3 version barely adds anything of note and there are still glitches up the wazoo from a year-old, apparently improved, game. If it were truly budget – think five quid and on PSN – we would be more open to its limited charms. As it stands, this is very much pushing into the 'stinker' realms.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

When it works, it is a reasonable distraction. But it's glitchy, rough around the edges – still – and really not worth the asking price. A potential sequel, tidied up and released via PSN, would be far more alluring.

45%

CONGRATULATIONS IMAG 1AWARD
HIGH SCORE

10000083.....RGM

01020000.....GTM

00300200.....EDG

00023640.....PCZ

00006560.....PCG

00003500.....DNM

00000200.....OPM

THE AWARD-WINNING
GUIDE TO
CLASSIC GAMES

CREDIT 0

INSERT COIN



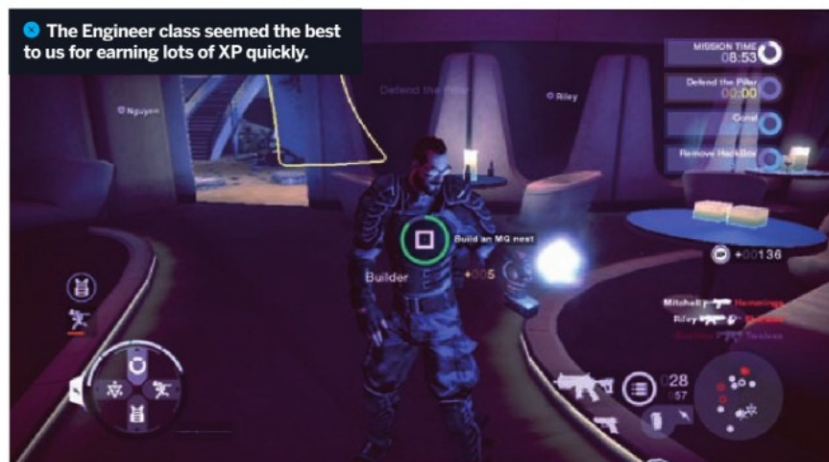
retro
GAMER

ip
IMAGINE
PUBLISHING

gma
gamesmediaawards



The Engineer class seemed the best to us for earning lots of XP quickly.



Brink

At the very edge of greatness

DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda
Developer
Splash Damage
Release date
Out Now
Price
£49.99
Players
2-16
Genre
FPS

It doesn't take long playing *Brink* to see that whatever it may lack offline really means nothing once you're hooked up with friends. Splash Damage has put together a genuinely co-operative, team-based shooter that contains all the thrills and drama that you could want. *Brink* has its flaws, but they're small and fixable and don't take anything significant away from the experience.

For instance, getting into a match with friends posed an odd challenge in that those of lower rank weren't allowed to join us. We had to get the guy with the lowest rank to kick off a campaign for their rank and higher. We guess Splash Damage did this to give new players a chance of playing without being thrown into a high-level game. An option to allow players of any rank (perhaps only friends) further down the line would be welcome just to get rid of the complication.

One thing that doesn't need much work is weapon balancing, which seems pretty strong. When you're up against bots in co-op

it's worth noting they are deadly accurate with the shotgun. In your hands and in versus it didn't seem to be as much of an issue. Picking a balanced loadout is very important. We found having at least one rapid fire weapon was essential. You'll have to work very hard for very little reward in terms of XP.

Keep moving and keep using your abilities and it makes a lot of sense

We recommend spending some time levelling your character up to get the most out of *Brink*. We really began to enjoy our co-op games once everyone had a few abilities and we could give each other some serious perks. Once the Kevlar vests, turrets and hacks begin to kick in the fun levels rise. Stick with it and the rewards will come.

Players used to meaty online FPS play where you hold your position may find *Brink* to be a little erratic. The fact is this is not a game

for standing still. The SMART system is there to make moving around as simple as possible. Our two most used buttons were **L2** (run) and **△** (interact), not shoot. Keep moving and keep using your abilities and *Brink* makes a lot of sense.

With the different class abilities and objectives *Brink* may seem intimidating at first, but really it's giving you only the information that's useful to you. Once you understand just how smart *Brink* is at telling you only what you need to know, you'll realise how brilliantly balanced and designed

it is, making you work as part of a team without needing to see the bigger picture.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Splash Damage set out to create a truly co-operative team shooter and that's exactly what it's achieved, but this is just the beginning. If the community holds and some much-needed updates drop this will be something special. ★★★★★

online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。

PSN Roundup



● Doing something new and innovative in racing multiplayer is a tough task.



● Codemasters has had some fun with DiRT 3's MP. It's full of good ideas.

DiRT 3 Care in the community

Publisher Codemasters Developer Codemasters Release date Out now Price £39.99 Players 1-8 Genre Racing

There are three main multiplayer exercises in *DiRT 3*, all based around the same areas as the gymkhana levels. Transporter is a basic game of capture the flag, but utilising your cars to manoeuvre around the course to outdo the other team, while finding the multiple bases. We've come a long way from *Unreal Tournament*, evolving from two legs to four wheels. And without guns. And more mud. And other... stuff.

Invasion sees Battersea power station invaded by cardboard-cutout robots, and to score points you have to run them over. Avoid the cutout skyscrapers and hone your driving skills to gain top points. Crazy concept, but everyone loves running things down, even if they're made of cardboard rather than fun robot stuff like oil and voices that whir to a halt when the robot dies.

Finally there's Outbreak. We aren't allowed to call these cars zombies

because Codemasters PR team would crash through the nearest window and smash up our keyboards (that or send an angry email), but that is in essence what this mode is all about. At the start of the round a random player becomes infected, their screen goes green, and it's a big game of 'tag' to infect others on the map – last standing wins.

All modes require a certain level of gymkhana skill and agility to really make the most of it. If you don't have the greatest driving ability it can get tedious to constantly crash and burn, but these modes will appeal to those who want to push their talent to the limit and make a change from the usual first-past-the-finish-line fare.

Jennifer Taylor

VERDICT

Weird, different, fresh and innovative, a genuine alternative to other online racing games. ★★★★★

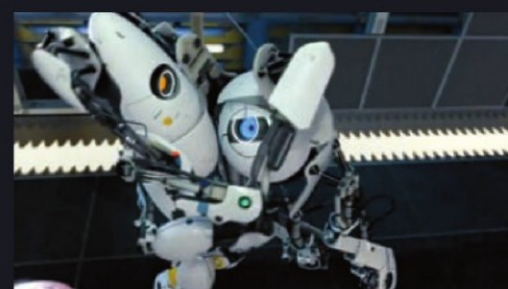
PORTAL 2

Best co-op game on PS3?

Publisher EA Developer Valve Release date Out now Price £49.99 Players 1-2 Genre Puzzle

Dropping hints of storyline from the main campaign and bringing her dry humour, in *Portal 2*'s co-op mode GLaDOS launches a full-scale puzzle attack on the two little droids you're playing as, with co-ordinated head-scratching, communication and puzzle-solving essential to progress.

Both robots are issued with their own separate portal device, so in total each level can be solved using up to four corresponding portals, which at times becomes baffling. The same elements from the single-player game are utilised, such as the gels, walkways, Faith Plates



and standing still gawping at the screen trying to figure out what the hell is going on. It's an entertaining and challenging co-op experience that offers something new and is not to be missed. JT

★★★★★

SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR

Perfect for happy campers

Publisher City Interactive Developer City Interactive Release date Out now Price £39.99 Players 1-12 Genre FPS

To be fair, *Ghost Warrior* online plays far more like the sniper game we wanted the single-player mode to be. Unfortunately, it's still not very good. While it's initially refreshing to be forced to sneak around in an online shooter for once, that feeling is soon replaced by abject boredom. Rather than a slow-paced and tactical battle of wits with your foes, skirmishes turn into simply hiding behind a wall and training your scope somewhere you thought you saw something move until either you get a glimpse of an opponent and pull the



trigger, or until you get shot in the face. In some ways, though, it's still better than the main game. ID

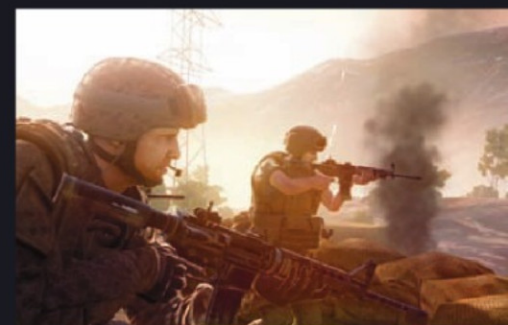
★★★★★

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RED RIVER

Mo' multiplayer, mo' problems

Publisher Codemasters Developer Codemasters Release date Out now Players 1-4 Price £49.99 Genre FPS

Rather than simply throw players into the basic online arena of 'shoot each other in the face quickly', *Operation Flashpoint* approaches things in a more intelligent fashion. Fire squads are formed and teams of four players roam conflict zones, co-operatively taking on a few different modes as well as the main campaign itself. Players have to approach situations carefully and with a great deal of communication lest they end up dead or dying – and in some cases being cut down is the end of it, with death meaning game over. It's a solid online mode and



brings something well beyond what the single-player alone manages. It still suffers similar issues, though. ID

★★★★★



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Treyarch
Release Date
Out now
Price
£9.99
Players
1-16
Genre
FPS
Website
www.callofduty.com
Twitter
@Treyarch
Facebook
facebook.com/treyarch

Call Of Duty: Escalation_{DLC}

Four big wins and an epic fail

These are the best *Call Of Duty* maps to date. Fact. Not opinion. Cold, hard fact. It's not even a declaration that these four new playgrounds make up the best *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* maps. No, these are the best in the whole series to date, even when put up against the likes of Vacant from *Call Of Duty 4*. There are that good.

But enough overblown declarations we'll regret in a few months, onto the details. The maps are Convoy, Stockpile, Hotel and Zoo. Convoy is a large, circular map dominated by a collapsed bridge in the middle. Littered with burnt-out and broken-down vehicles, there are wide-open action spots for the reckless, plenty of cover for the cowardly and sniper battles on the bridge for the specialist.

Hotel is similar in that it accommodates plenty of play styles, thanks to two buildings with obvious vantage points overlooking a swimming pool death arena for players to scamper around in. Think *Modern Warfare 2*'s Highrise without an underground tunnel to avoid conflict. Zoo is a dark, drab and dilapidated map that sports winding tunnels, broken buildings and high railings to creep around. It's full of unusual angles and strange structures, making it one of the more interesting multiplayer maps in the series.

Stockpile looks like it will emerge as the fans' favourite from the bundle. Centred around a Russian missile silo, there are two huge entrances that can be opened and

closed by players using a button on either side. The action is focused on the inside of the building and so opportunistic players set up near the doors, waiting for players brave enough to try and open them. This means there's a breakneck pace to the action when players are packed inside and tension as you approach the doors and hope no one's got the drop on you.

Unfortunately, the excellence of these multiplayer maps is dampened by the huge disappointment of *Call Of The Dead*, the new Zombies map. From the original Zombies mode in *World at War* to the presidents running riot in *Black Ops*, the undead distraction has slowly

increased in scope and ambition but *Call Of The Dead* finally sees Treyarch stumbling over breaking point and attempt too much.

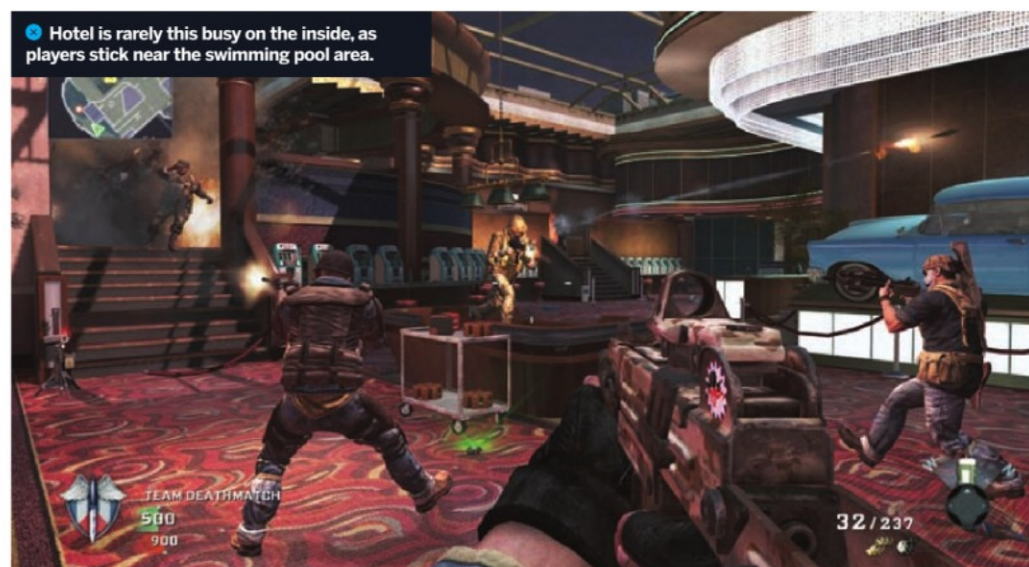
It's simply too big. The need for teamwork, already a stumbling block in the *Call Of Duty* community, is stretched thin across the giant frozen ship, cliff and lighthouse that makes up *Call Of The Dead*. Bringing guest actors in such as Danny Trejo is a nice marketing bulletpoint but when the action kicks off, Sarah Michelle Gellar's feminine figure is the only distinguishing characteristic among the faceless crew. Having an invincible George Romero stalking you is a cute touch but often a frustrating one when poor team-mates shoot him by mistake, triggering his rage and causing him to rush the nearest player. It's packed with ideas but none of them hang together well. Great maps then, just not a perfect package.

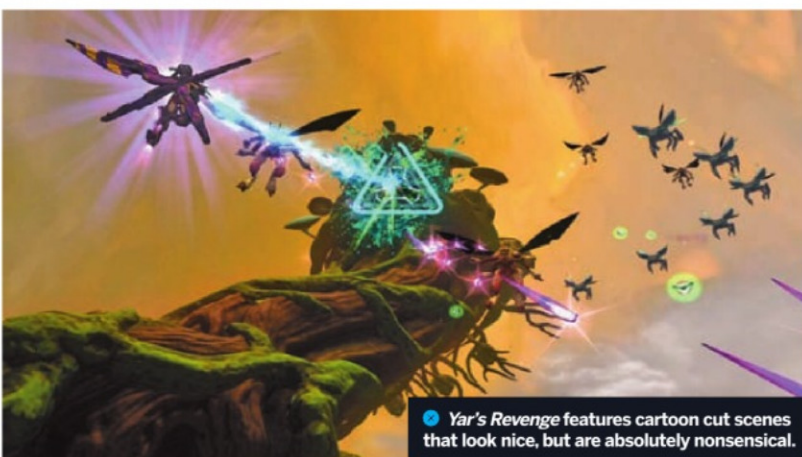
Ryan King

VERDICT

Best multiplayer maps to date but *Call Of The Dead* is a huge missed opportunity.

80%





Yar's Revenge features cartoon cut scenes that look nice, but are absolutely nonsensical.

DETAILS

Publisher
Atari
Developer
Killspace
Entertainment
Release Date
Out now
Price
TBC
Players
1
Genre
Shooter
Website
www.atari.com
Twitter
@atari
Facebook
facebook.com/atari

Yar's Revenge

Up Yar's

If you've never seen the original Atari 2600 *Yar's Revenge*, released way back in 1982, then take our word for it when we say it looks nothing like the screenshots you see surrounding this review. It looked more like the old Teletext would if it had just been hacked by Anonymous.

No, the only thing this remake shares with the original game is its back story and the fact that you shoot things. Here, however, it's been remade as a Tetsuya Mizuguchi-inspired on-rails shooter, with many of the mechanics and the thumping techno soundtrack immediately recalling *Rez*.

If *Rez* featured botched, repetitive design, that is. The thing that made Mizuguchi's shooter so brilliant was its minimalism and simplicity, two things that *Yar's Revenge* neglects in its overcooked, overcomplicated design. The levels aren't minimal dataspace constructed of *Tron*-esque wireframe enemies, but somewhat garish environments that occasionally promise something more, but usually feel generic and clichéd.

You're not only juggling the use of standard machine gun fire, a powerful rail gun and



The levels often show promise, but always end up feeling generic and clichéd.

lock-on missiles, but you're also using the face buttons to activate four collectable power-ups.

The control setup only feels less intuitive when you factor in that you're not just controlling the reticule with the right analogue stick, but also Yar's movement with the left.

It doesn't take *too* long to get accustomed to the setup, but it's a take on the genre that never feels as elegant or enjoyable as in games like *Panzer Dragoon*. A combo meter that continuously ticks up upon killing various winged beasties and insectoid enemies adds an arcade sense of satisfaction to proceedings – the higher the combo the more you feel involved in the action – but any genuine enjoyment tends to feel tantalisingly out of reach. *Yar's Revenge* is simply too short and too lacking in substance to be considered an essential PlayStation Network purchase.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Yar's Revenge isn't terrible, but surely Atari has better games to remake? **57%**

DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Housemarque
Release Date
Out now
Price
TBC
Players
1-2
Genre
Platformer
Website
www.housemarque.com
Twitter
@housemarque
Facebook
facebook.com/housemarque

Outland

GAME

An outlandish platformer, or merely standard fare?

Outland is one striking-looking game. In taking control of the reincarnation of an ancient warrior responsible for restoring balance to creation, you'll travel across a silhouetted landscape of thick jungle canopy and ancient Mayan ruins. The levels vary very little outside of colour hue, but each still feels like an ancient cave painting breathed into vibrant life.

Unfortunately the beauty of the visuals belies a fairly average platformer. *Outland's* concept is a mixed bag of ideas borrowed from classics such as *Castlevania* and *Ikaruga*. However, the *Metroidvania* setup of gaining new abilities and accessing new areas feels disappointingly linear due to a glowing trail that always points you in the right direction, and the platforming isn't particularly challenging.

The elements borrowed from *Ikaruga* work better, though. In changing the colour of your protagonist between blue and red you can absorb projectiles

of the same colour and damage enemies of the opposite. You'll find yourself attempting to manoeuvre past sweeping, beaming, spiralling projectiles that demand split-second colour changes alongside the regular demands of platforming and combat. It's easily the best part of the game.

It's not the only clever idea in *Outland* – the story co-op is bland, but the unlockable co-op challenges offer something different, such as giving one player control of colour switching for both. It's a well-conceived addition, and shows that Housemarque has ideas of its own to match that vivid aesthetic. We'll be looking out for its next project.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

The aesthetic is arresting, but the gameplay not so much. **72%**

Arcade mode allows levels from single-player to be replayed with a timer, score and multiplier.



Some of Outland's bosses recall Shadow Of The Colossus.





Paul

PRICE: £15.99 **SOUND:** TBC **DIRECTOR:** Greg Mottola **STARRING:** Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Seth Rogen

ALL THE ELEMENTS swirling in *Paul*'s cosmic mix should add up to something special, with Greg Mottola of *Superbad* fame directing; Pegg and Frost both writing and acting; and a collection of well-liked and recognisable American actors fleshing out the cast. Unfortunately, the blend doesn't quite work, the mix of comedy from both sides of

the pond clashing rather than fusing and resulting in an awkward mess of jokes that are either half-funny or overly puerile. It feels a broader and more commercial effort than Pegg and Frost's previous films, and less entertaining because of it. Make no mistake, this is *not* the final film in *The Three Flavours Cornetto* trilogy. **RATING:** ★★☆☆☆



True Grit

PRICE: £16.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 **DIRECTOR:** Ethan Coen, Joel Coen **STARRING:** Jeff Bridges, Matt Damon

GRMMFMFFGR gmtmsggfd gramawafulaw! Sorry, we were impersonating Jeff Bridge's near-impenetrable Texan drawl there, an accent he uses in *True Grit* to such effect that deciphering syllables requires the kind of concentration and focus we usually reserve for picking out new socks. It seems he can't help but channel The Dude these days; his performance as

far flung from John Wayne's proud enunciation as imaginable. But this isn't a re-imagining of the 1969 film, it's The Coen Brothers' coarse, bristly and humorous adaptation of the 1968 book. Their vision is cold, austere and violent, but also poignant, sad and gentle, and beautifully photographed from beginning to end. **RATING:** ★★★★★



Neds

PRICE: £11.99 **SOUND:** TBC **DIRECTOR:** Peter Mullan **STARRING:** Conor McCarron, Mariana Palka, Peter Mullan

FORGET JAMES CAMERON'S Pandora – if you want to see a really terrifying and inhospitable environment then look no further than *Neds*' Seventies Glasgow. It's a depressing, hopeless place, where the youths are all knife-wielding thugs who make life hell for everyone else. John McGill – a once promising student – grows up to find that the terrifying legend of his older brother

and intense peer pressure bring his inner aggression bubbling to the surface, he too falling into a life of crime he hoped to avoid. It's more brutal and bloody than similar flicks like the superior *This Is England*, and one that meanders to its conclusion rather than strikes at it. Still, it's a visceral drama you won't forget any time soon. **RATING:** ★★★★★



James Franco puts in a stunning performance as Aron Ralston.

127 Hours

Trapped between a rock and a hard place



PRICE: £17.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD Master Audio **DIRECTOR:** Danny Boyle **STARRING:** James Franco, Amber Tamblyn, Kate Mara

Inspired by true events. It's a claim we hear often when sitting down to watch a film, and a sentence in which the real meaning is loaded at the front of the sentence – 'inspired by'. What we're really being told is that some of these events *did* happen, but a lot of them probably didn't. Or at least, not in the glamorous, Hollywood-infused manner in which we see them play out on screen.

But somewhere in the world there *is* sat a man named Aron Ralston with just one hand, having hacked off his other with a tiny penknife after becoming trapped in the remote Blue John Canyon in Utah. Whatever precedes that dizzying act of violence at the film's end might be a collection of half-truths and poetic licence, but that one astonishing fact remains – this man cut off his own arm to survive, and there's something shockingly human about that story that makes the entirety of *127 Hours* absolutely gripping, if not somewhat morbid, viewing.

And yet Danny Boyle doesn't present Aron Ralston as the heroic figure you might expect given his audacious actions. Instead Ralston is introduced as something of an arrogant and self-confident climber, forgoing safety in his chase of his next endorphin rush. His situation – having his arm irrevocably jammed under a massive

boulder – is one of his own making and there's no one to blame but himself. It's a situation that forces him to reflect on his past presented in stylised flashbacks, and ultimately confront the only one reality that awaits him.

You're with him every step of the journey – the realisation of the event; his fantasies of escape; the moment when he has to drink his own urine; and eventually the terrible moment of escape itself. You grow to like him as you begin to see through his pig-headedness and conceit to the vulnerability of the man beneath. The moments leading up to Ralston's final ordeal feel somewhat overly sentimental and mawkish – a gold-tinted hallucination of the future generations of his family inspiring him to choose life over loneliness and death – but we challenge anyone to watch the closing shots of the film and not experience the same sense of freedom, joy and exaltation that Ralston must have felt when he left his arm behind in the Blue John Canyon.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

This is simply a story about a man who cut off his arm to survive. Most directors would try to impart a bold statement about the power of human will and fortitude, but Boyle's subtlety, compassion and intelligence makes this a far better reflection on the experience.

RATING: ★★★★★

Movies that should be videogames

Imagine *Heavy Rain* but with survival-horror elements and a HUGE monster.



CLOVERFIELD



Right, forget the video camera bit, and focus on the monster the size of a bloody blimp in the middle of New York bit. That's the element that would make this an excellent game.

Imagine it as something of a mix of survival horror and *Heavy Rain*. Combat would be a very small part of the experience; for the most part

it would be about staying alive as you attempt to escape a city besieged by a giant monster. It would be all about the spectacle – some of the scenes would be panicked escapes from skyscrapers as they collapsed around you, while others would see you being chased by the monster itself down the long avenues of the Big Apple.

There would be some combat – the smaller creatures that drop off the monster could provide tenser, claustrophobic battles in the subways that crisscross below Manhattan – but for the most part this would be a game about endurance, survival and beating the odds. And watching a massive monster smash the crap out of things.

Terrible videogame movie of the month

WE'RE BEING A bit harsh here, because even though *Street Fighter* is one of the worst videogame movies, it's weirdly also one of the best. It's difficult not to like it... Raul Julia's performance as M Bison verges on the sublime.



Classic Blu-ray

Fantastic Blu-rays you need to have in your collection



#5 Akira

Price £17.99 **Sound** Dolby TrueHD 5.1 **Director** Katsuhiro Otomo
Starring Mitsuo Iwata, Nozomu Sasaki, Mami Koyama

THERE ARE FEW films as deserving of the HD treatment as *Akira*. It is rightly considered a masterpiece of graphic storytelling, boasting some of the most impressive visual work ever seen in an anime film. While animes had previously been notorious for cutting production corners *Akira* made no such compromises, creating incredibly detailed backdrops, lip-synced dialogue – a first for an anime production – and super-fluid motion as realised in the film's 160,000-plus animation cels.

It was like no animation ever seen before, and *Akira* single-handedly led to the proliferation of anime outside of Japan. It's not a perfect film by any means – it's a glaring example of the pitfalls encountered when trying to cram 2,182 pages of manga into just two hours – but outside of its confusing narrative it remains a beautiful, frightening and exhilarating piece of filmmaking that still arguably stands as one of the best works in animation today. Let's hope the planned live-action version doesn't detract from any of the magic it still holds.

Akira looks sublime on Blu-ray.

Movie weapons we want to see in videogames



Ol' Painless – Predator

TONS OF VIDEOGAMES have done their very best to imitate Blain's weapon from *Predator*, but none of them have managed to completely capture its combination of utter power with total preposterousness.



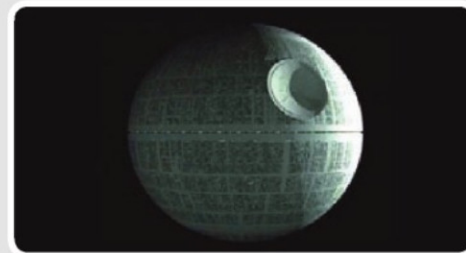
The ZF-1 – The Fifth Element

USED BY JEAN-Baptiste Emanuel Zorg in *The Fifth Element*, this is the Swiss Army knife of weapons, able to direct all bullets to its last target; both set fire to or freeze enemies; fire poison darts; and blow itself up. However, it has nothing on...



The Annihilator 2000 – Beverly Hills Cop III

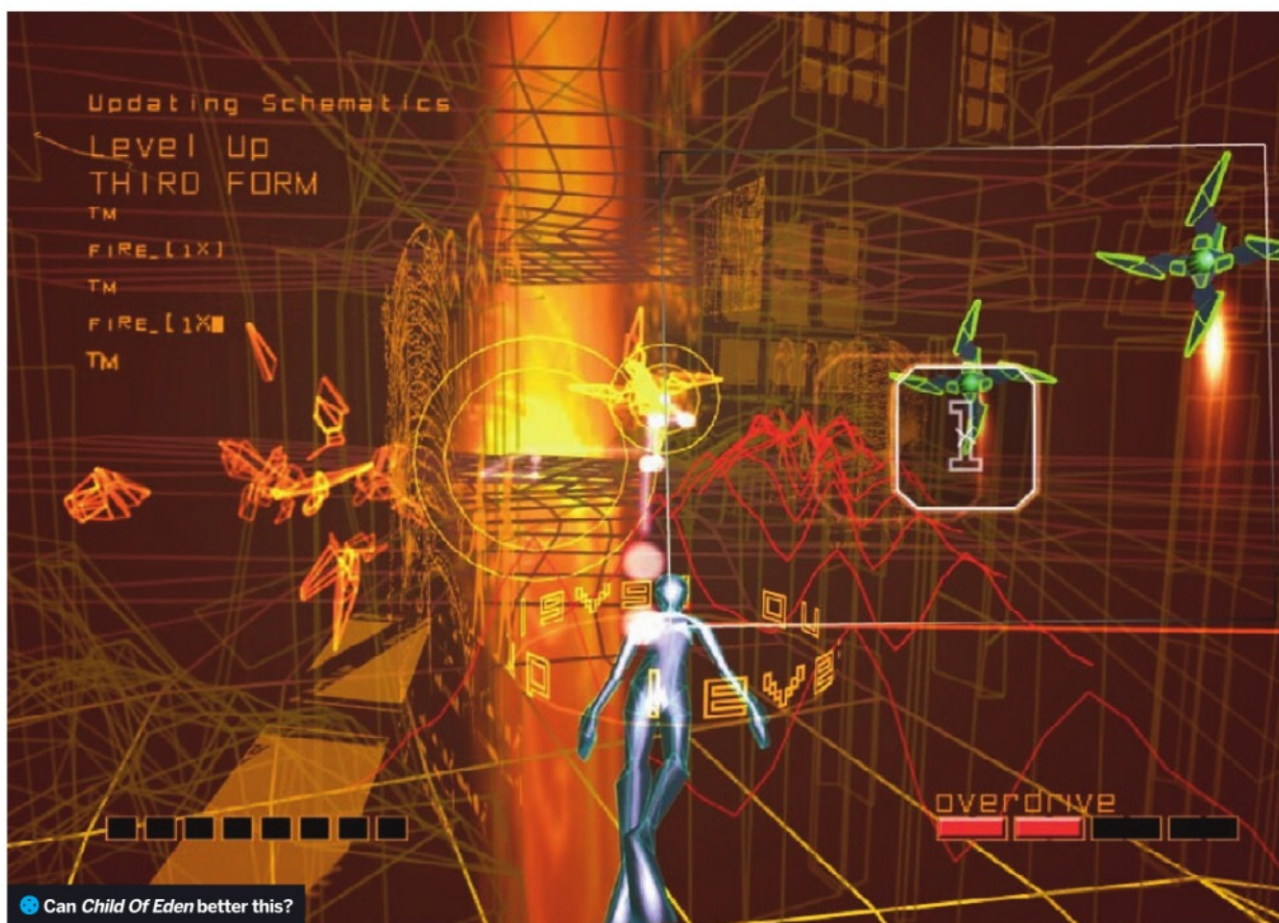
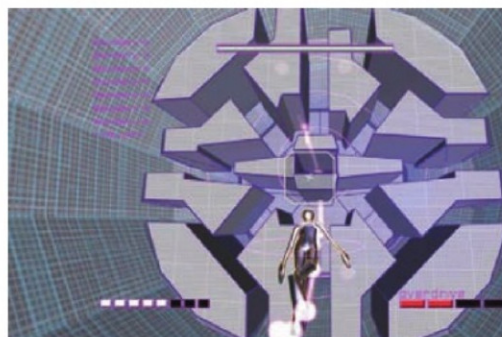
...AMERICA'S PREMIERE SURVIVAL Home and Travel Total Security Unit. Along with various weapons, this gun also comes equipped with a phone, CD player and even a microwave. Because all weapons need a microwave.



The Death Star – Star Wars

THIS WOULD BE the ultimate killstreak unlock in *Call Of Duty*. Imagine everyone running around Nuketown like headless chickens and then you just roll up in the driving seat of the Death Star. Overkill? We don't know the meaning of the word.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE... The games that changed it all



Can *Child Of Eden* better this?



Rez

- Release date November 2001 • Publisher Sony • Developer United Games Artists
- Games it influenced *Child Of Eden* • *Everyday Shooter*

Rez is the kind of title that splits gamers down the middle. There are those that will evangelise its psychedelic, kaleidoscopic visual electronica as a turning point in videogames, showcasing a new type of experience that wasn't concerned with narrative, characters or big explosions but instead the emotional and expressive nature of gameplay and graphics. Then there are those players

Rez was an important stepping stone in the development of games as an artistic pursuit

who appreciate the aesthetic and synaesthetic aspirations, but criticise it as a case of form over function; the actual gameplay requiring little more than pointing a cursor at an enemy and then letting go of a button.

What about us here at **Play**? Well, we fall somewhere between the two camps. *Rez* isn't a work of art (even though it was inspired by the abstract paintings of Wassily Kandinsky) and its gameplay is certainly simplistic, but that does not a bad game make. In fact, it's because of this that *Rez* is as beautiful, enthralling, and trance-like as it is. It's a game that doesn't thrill, but mesmerises; it's highs found in the mellow, rhythmic pulsing of both music and gameplay. It's not about being

astounded by big set pieces and spectacle, it's about absorbing the game's flow and its layering of sight and sound.

Very few games were attempting to capture such a feeling during the period *Rez* was released. Most titles released in 2001 were all about the action – *Max Payne*, *Devil May Cry*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, *Metal Gear Solid 2* – these were some of the best games of their generation but all focused

on exhilaration and excitement. *Rez*, along with *Ico* and *Silent Hill 2*, showed

that games could be introspective rather than extroverted. They didn't need to be about guns and violence; they could be quiet and reflective and still deliver the same sense of impact.

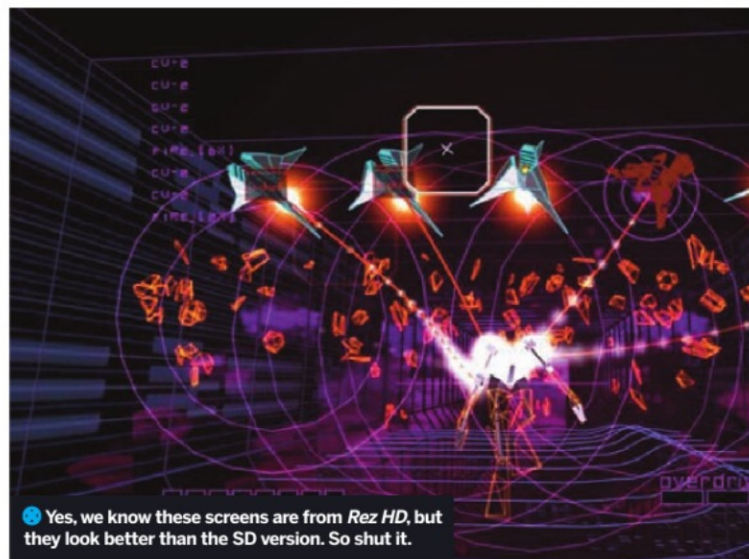
Rez may not be the best game ever made, but it was certainly an important stepping stone in the development of games as an artistic and inventive pursuit.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 85 • 73%

"Whilst trippy, colourific zen-hunting, converging games with clubby electronica and hold-lock-shoot play mechanics are nothing new, it is at least refreshing to see the quest for graphical realism eschewed in favour of the direct opposite."

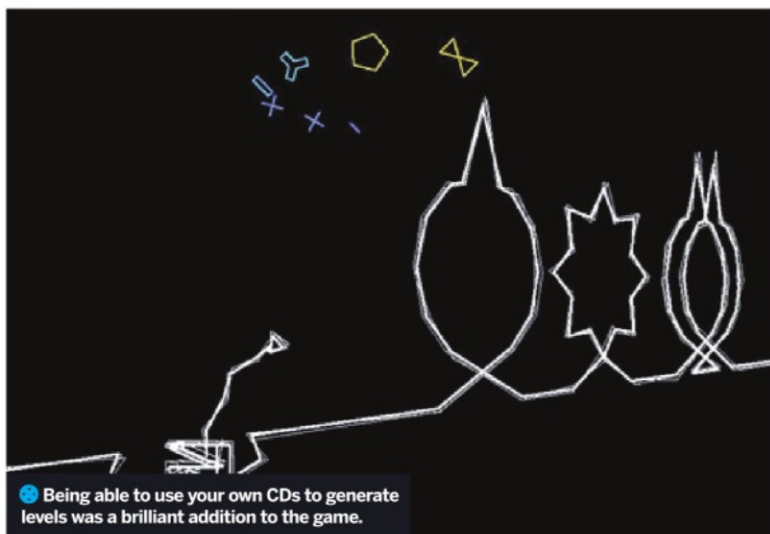


We ate a weird cactus once. It made the whole world look like this.



Yes, we know these screens are from *Rez HD*, but they look better than the SD version. So shut it.

YOU NEVER PLAYED THIS



Being able to use your own CDs to generate levels was a brilliant addition to the game.



Vib-Ribbon

• Release date September 2000
• Publisher Sony • Developer NanaOn-Sha

With *Rez* on the opposite page, we're feeling a bit nostalgic about the music-based games that comprised our formative years with PlayStation.

When most people hear 'music' and 'PlayStation' they immediately think of *PaRappa The Rapper* (or *Wu-Tang: Taste the Pain* if they're trying to show off), but three years after we'd freestyled alongside the beanie-wearing pooch we played another of Masaya Matsuura's games that

was no less brilliant. That game was *Vib-Ribbon*. Although you probably already guessed that since it says *Vib-Ribbon* in big letters up there.

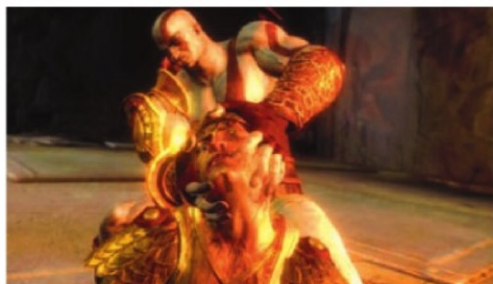
The screenshots might not look overly impressive, but the gameplay truly was. The objective was to guide Vibri along a white ribbon filled with obstacles that corresponded to the song playing. These obstacles took the forms of blocks, loops, waves and pits that required a different button press to negotiate. Two

obstacles could also be combined, demanding simultaneous button presses if Vibri was to progress past them.

It might sound easy but it was anything but. It was a bloody difficult game, but a bloody good one too, with some bloody great foot-tapping tunes and bloody addictive gameplay to match. What made it even more enjoyable was that we could even use our own CDs to generate the levels. Believe us, playing *Vib-Ribbon* along to Slipknot is no easy task. We ended up just using panpipe music instead. Bloody game.

GREECE ACCORDING TO PLAYSTATION

WE RECKON MYTHOLOGICAL Greece would have been a sweet place to live if it wasn't for Kratos. We imagine it would've been full of verdant gardens, magical creatures and buxom goddesses. But ever the charmer, Kratos killed everyone. Cheers Kratos. Idiot.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT ...

24: The Game

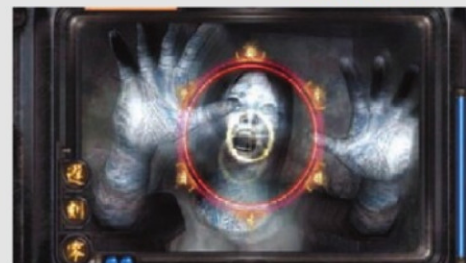
WHEN 24 FIRST began it was a TV revelation – boasting production values that matched cinema and truly tense moments. We hoped that *24: The Game* would match its TV counterpart with excellent third-person mechanics, driving sequences that felt like they were out of *GTA*, and interrogation scenes that would have even us giving answers just to make Bauer stop.

We got none of this. *24: The Game* was the videogame equivalent of the television series if the television series had cast Rick Moranis in the lead role, every episode was a minute long and the whole series' narrative was based around Moranis buying a new pair of socks. Basically we're saying the game was absolute rubbish. We really could have done without it.



If you thought the 24 television series was bad then you'll really hate this game.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Fatal Frame

FATAL FRAME WAS an atmospheric and cleverly designed survival horror that mined its frights from one central conceit – your only weapon was a camera. We won't play it again, though. It's because we can't be bothered... not because we're too scared. Honest...



Warriors Orochi

WARRIORS OROCHI WASN'T actually that bad; we got more enjoyment out of it than most other games in the *Dynasty Warriors* series. But we won't play it again because we don't need to. Omega Force releases practically the same game every year.



Driv3r

WE WERE SO excited about *Driv3r* in the run-up to its release. We so wanted it to be good. But it wasn't. It was dire. Sometimes we say we'll go back to it just to see if it was actually okay. But we won't. Because it wasn't.

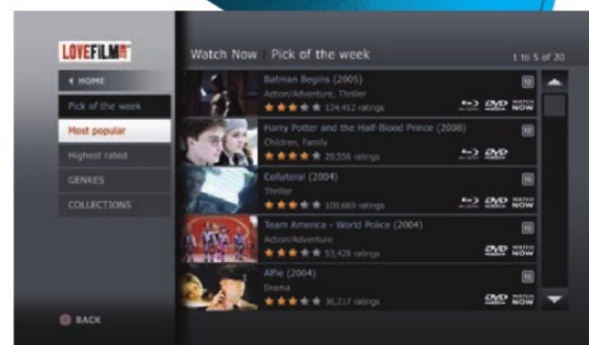


Everblue 2

AN ADMISSION: WE just picked *Everblue 2* at random because we needed to fill this space. We only played it once a very long time ago, and we've never thought about playing it again. Until now, that is, because we just saw it has sharks in it. We won't, though, because it also looks pants.

It really only does everything

Did you know that the black box under your TV can do more than just play games? No? Well pay attention and we'll fill you in...



✓ Music Unlimited powered by Qriocity Listen to music forever

The clue's in the name – the chance to listen to music for an unlimited period of time. What this means is a choice of any of about 7 million songs from all the major labels, streamed through your console and pumped straight into your big, fat ears so you can sing and dance about like the lunatic you are. That sounds great, yes? Well, it's *alright*. The main problem with the service is it costs £3.99 a month for a basic service and £9.99 for the premium one. According to Sony, we would only take umbrage with this if we were pirates, used to downloading music for free. To that, Sony, we say: Spotify and Last.fm. Music Unlimited is clearly a good service, but beyond the 30-day free trial is there really much point when similar, free alternatives are available? That's up to you to decide.

✓ Life With PlayStation Watch videos, cure cancer

Have you ever wondered why you're wasting your life playing videogames and not helping anybody else in the world ever? Have you ever thought that maybe you should get off your rotund rump and go out into the world to make a difference? And have you ever then realised you can't be bothered going out, but that you still want to help? Well did you know you can contribute to Stanford University's Folding@home project via your PlayStation 3? You did? Well did you know it's a lot better than when it first launched, allowing you to read up-to-date news and now watch videos and ting? You did? Oh. Right. Well even so, it's still nice that when you don't want to play any games you can instead contribute to a project that's slowly but surely helping us get a broader understanding of diseases such as cancer. It lets you feel smug, basically.

✓ Lovefilm Stream films and rent games

We're still reasonably proud of ourselves for getting the scoop on Lovefilm coming to PS3 as we did all those months (years?) ago. Anyway, this is another movie service for those of you who don't get enough from Qriocity and VDS, and it should be familiar to most of you who've seen the irritating adverts made up of snippets of dialogue from some of the 2,000+ films available to stream. It doesn't offer high-definition streaming, but PS3-compatible subscriptions start at £5.99 a month and, if you up the ante a bit more, you can actually get game rentals along with your streaming movies. Sure, they don't get beamed down your intertubes, instead having to be sent out in the mail like they're from the past or something, but it makes Lovefilm a far more appealing package as a result – films and games, we love them both.

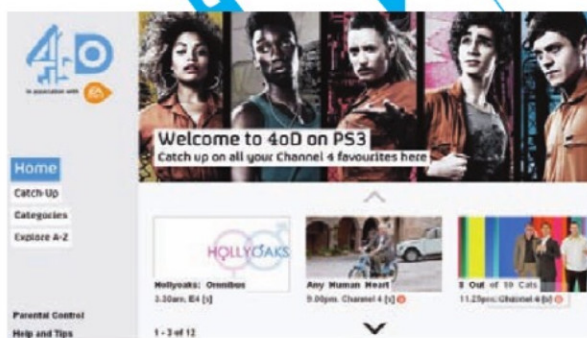
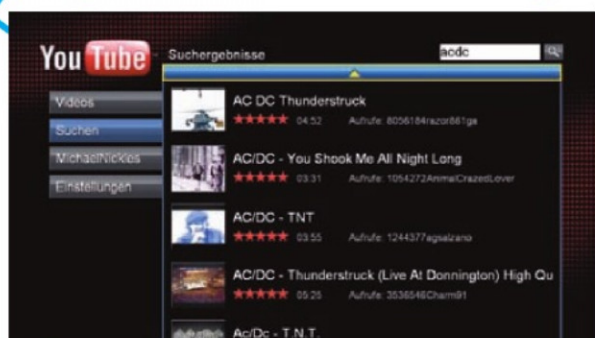


✓ Mubi Obscure movies on demand

What we have here is yet another video-on-demand streaming service, pumping cinematic *delights* through your LCD/plasma/LED straight into your brain. But wait! Mubi at least does things a bit differently, bringing to the table something a bit distinct from other services. International, independent and classic cinema takes centre stage alongside some more obvious choices. As well as the more eclectic selection of films on show there is no subscription charge and a surprising number of flicks are free to watch. We'd recommend the 1903 version of *Alice In Wonderland*, mainly because it's not that crap. As it's another streaming service you don't get to download the films and you don't get to keep them either – but each rental lasts seven days and you're free to watch and re-watch. It's almost as if the Mubi guys and gals *want* to treat their customers well...

Living In America

There's a fair bit more you can get on PS3, but only if you live in the US. Vudu is a video streaming service, offering 1080p HD movies from all the studios you'd expect. Netflix is a name you may well be familiar with, and basically offers the same service as we get on these shores with Lovefilm. Hulu Plus brings TV series streaming over the tellybox. Then of course there's Sony's own Video Delivery Service, which in the US has a great selection of TV shows to download alongside the usual filmic loveliness. It's annoying to browse the US store and see all the things we're not allowed to get over here...



☒ The internet

Information superhighway

You know this thing, right? It's like a giant box full of pornography and amusing pictures of cats. And while the PS3 web browser isn't exactly Firefox-good, it is a lot better than the one on 360. Why? Mainly because they don't have one at all. So rub it in the faces of your Microsoft-owning enemies by sitting on your PS3, browsing YouTube, send those same enemies an email through Gmail (or, more hilariously, through Hotmail), blog about how you're using your PS3 to go on the internet, order some delicious food through any number of online takeaway ordering services or buy a hammer on Amazon. It's not perfect and it's as fiddly as the fiddler on the roof, but it can often be handy – useful, even – to have an internet browser there and ready to go.



☒ VidZone

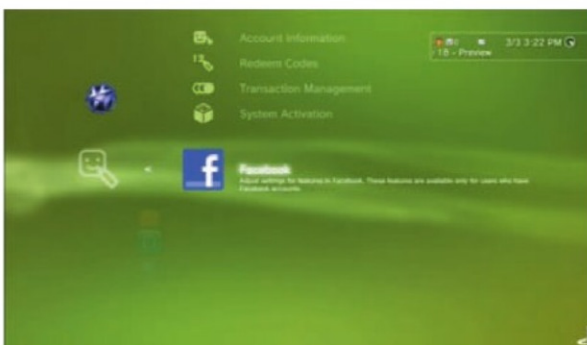
Music video library

We're never gonna turn our noses up at a free music video streaming service, that's for sure. Never before had we seen such excitement for a new service arriving. We're gonna let ourselves make decisions on what's actually worth watching, though – that's your choice. When you down a few naughty boozes VidZone can be the kind of thing that keeps a party going. It's never gonna kill the excitement to put on some Michael Jackson, after all. You run around the whole of the internet looking for videos like this, but VidZone has them all together, easy to access. Rejoice and desert the old, searching ways – VidZone is the way forward. But you just have to make sure you don't get Rickrolled.

☒ iPlayer/4OD/ITV Player

BBC, Channel 4 and ITV

We may be annoyed that the US seems to get a lot more TV than we do, but that's because we always forget about these little streaming gifts. iPlayer is one of the finest inventions the licence fee has ever bought for us, and 4OD and ITV Player both followed in the footsteps of the BBC's trailblazer, offering as they do recent and classic TV shows from the channels' catalogues. It's annoying that iPlayer seems a bit cut back from the fully-fledged home computer version (we've never been able to stream *Match Of The Day* on it, though we can on the PC/Mac version), but there's no arguing with the shows you can watch at any time, when you feel like it. Well, except for the ITV ones, but that's just because ITV is generally one of the worst things that ever happened to the world.

☒ Facebook

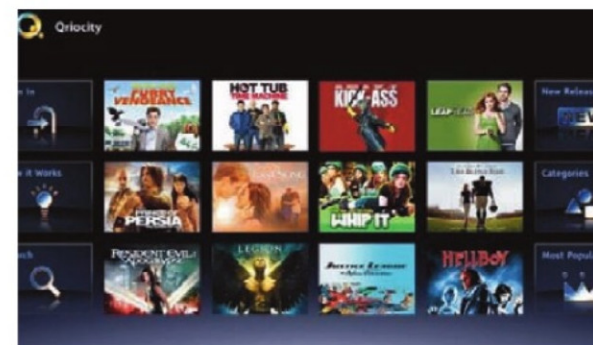
Stalk your ex via PS3

Do you remember when Sony proudly announced the addition of a Facebook widget to the XMB? We sort of do, but then we forgot all about it because it was gimmicky and a bit rubbish. Still, if you want to tie your Facebook account in with your PSN one so you can spam your friends' feeds with inane "so-and-so unlocked one Bronze Trophy on *Quantum Theory*" messages then the PS3 Facebook app is perfect for you. The rest of us will rest easy knowing that most of our phones are capable of giving us the full site in our hands, wherever we are and whatever we're doing. We're trying to be more positive, as it is a nice extra feature for the PS3, but it really is completely lacking in much of a point, limited as it is.

☒ **Video Delivery Service**

Movies for rent and for keeps

If you're like us, you might live in a world where you want to download some films properly – a world where you want to both *download* them and *keep* them forever. Or at least until your hard drive breaks, you're banned from PSN or the world comes to an end. Sony's Video Download Service, launched way back in 2009, covers that need quite well, offering both download rentals and movies for keepsies. While it's not instant like the streaming services are, it does mean that once you have downloaded the movie you aren't at the mercy of your internet connection – and, of course, being able to keep a film is a lot better than just being able to watch it once. The main issue, however, is again with the pricing – it's easy to get the same films for a hell of a lot cheaper on DVD or Blu-ray.



Curious about the future

Looking at what lies ahead

It hasn't been officially announced yet, but there is a VOD part of the Qriocity package that goes hand in hand with the Music Unlimited service. It's available on compatible Sony BRAVIA TVs and Blu-ray players right now and allows users to stream rented movies in SD and HD for between £2.49 and £4.49. You're renting, though, meaning you only get access to the film for 14 days, and once you start watching it you have just 48 hours to finish it. We'd guess Sony intends to partner Qriocity up with the existing Video Delivery Service to offer both streaming and downloadable movies, but then we are just guessing and don't actually have any knowledge one way or another as to whether this will actually happen.

PLAY#x Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...

Have you ever wondered how the Play team gets to work? No? Oh. Still...



Jon uses his trusty hot rod, of course.



Chris often has to return to land after a night out. Luckily he has a hovercraft!



Ryan, claiming it's cheaper than running a car, uses this bad boy.



Dan and Carl alternate between who gets the big tank and who the little one.



And Ian? Ian uses CRIME.

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the <i>Assassin's Creed</i> formula into modern classic territory.		
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
With its diverse roster, stunning visuals and furiously paced gameplay, <i>Continuum Shift</i> is a must-have for beat-'em-up fans.		
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		

game	issue	score
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Catherine*	203	48%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	203	72%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the <i>Dead Space</i> series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.		
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing <i>Guitar Hero</i> for the first time all over again, although <i>DJ Hero</i> is slightly more expensive.		
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
<i>Fallout 3</i> lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%

game	issue	score
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by <i>PES</i> seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA 11	197	91%
<i>FIFA</i> continues to improve and continues to dominate with this latest addition to the superior footy franchise.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for <i>GTA IV</i> to play them. What more could you want.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
<i>Guitar Hero III</i> is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.		
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Mortal Kombat PS3	81%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River PS3	75%
Portal 2 PS3	95%
SOCOM: Special Forces PS3	63%
Virtua Tennis 4 PS3	79%
Michael Jackson: The Experience PS3	58%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive PSP	42%
Patapon 3 PSP	81%
Dungeon Hunter: Alliance PSN	59%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes PSN	84%

Moon Diver PSN	46%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds PSN	78%

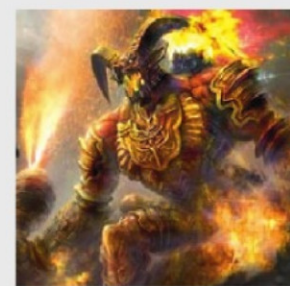
game	issue	score
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
 Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Killzone 3	202	80%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2:		
The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
 Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
 An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lord Of The R10		
202	88%	
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
 Why the hell are you reading this when you should be playing Mass Effect 2 instead? GO GO GO.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
 A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
 The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%

game	issue	score
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
Moto GP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
 Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
 Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%

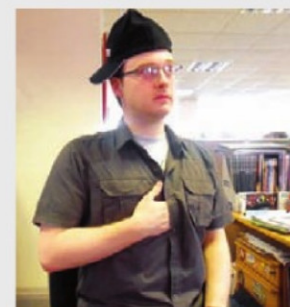
game	issue	score
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
 Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
 Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
 Just beating Blur to the chequered flag, Split/Second is a wonderfully intense racing game in the Burnout mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%

*denotes import review

PLAY'S DIARY



DAY 1: Turmoil engulfed the **Play** office as one-time nobody, now nobody with a bit more power Aaron Asadi returned to the fold. The evil Asadi soon took to taunting the team with evil doughnuts, evil cookies and other evil things.



DAY 7: Jon, still smarting from being evicted, was unsure what to do with himself. "I have been in exile for a week," he said. "I am now literally exactly the same as Napoleon, or something." He said this because he's well into history, our Jon.



DAY 12: Chris and Ryan meanwhile made plans on the other side of the partition. The overthrow of evil Asadi would soon come to pass and **Play** would once again be free. Except it didn't quite work out because Chris fell over and Ryan's pants fell down.



DAY 24: The fightback unsuccessful, the team decided instead to make a tactical retreat and move to higher, more sustainable and less-evil ground. Also: a bit closer to the kitchen. The new era begins now: more tea (and quicker), less evil (and doughnuts).

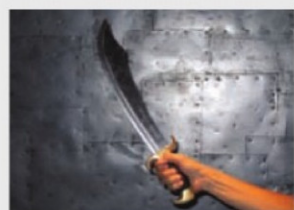
Pen vs Sword



PEN

'THE PEN IS mightier than the sword', or so some of them there folk in the world say. See, what they mean is that the pen (or any kind of printed word) is capable of bringing about a much wider and deeper form of change than mere swords (or any kind of force) is on its own. See – you're learning *while* enjoying yourself, isn't that great? No? Oh, okay, let's be silly instead then. Umm... you can get some pens that are made to look like swords, which kind of defeats the object of having them face off against each other like this. In fact, we might have once seen a pen that looked like a gun, but that was probably our imaginations going wild. Regardless, pens are far, far easier to get hold of than swords and as such have an insurmountable advantage over their stabby competition. That's scientific fact.

3 swords out of pen



SWORD

THOSE WHO SAY 'the sword is mightier than the pen' may well be talking literally, as the sword is indeed a great deal mightier than the pen. In that it imbues the user with far more physical might than a pen does. Especially when it's a massive sword made to shatter skulls, like the one ex-games editor Gavin Mackenzie has. Oh, Gav and his sword.

Anyway, swords are really good for a few things: wars before guns were invented; defending the honour of yourself or a loved one; pretend they're Lightsabers; to be knighted with – the list goes on. All the same, the pen is capable of conjuring up any of these situations and many more, and as such it probably just edges out the sword in this little test. Though we're still honestly not sure which of the two is mightier. If a hand grenade was involved, though...

3 pens out of sword

game	issue	score
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
 The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
 There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i>, stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
 This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
 Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. <i>Absolutely nothing</i>.		
The Saboteur	187	67%
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
 <i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%

game	issue	score
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
 A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11: World Snooker Championship	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS STORE LISTING

1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
 Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	70%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i>. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
 It doesn't have <i>MW2</i>'s polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3		
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%

game	issue	score
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
 With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	184	91%
 <i>Droplitz</i> is a superb puzzler that blends <i>Rez</i>-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.		
Dungeon Hunter: Alliance	205	59%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome II	202	83%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
 This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
 Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
 A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.		
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
 Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again.		
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
 Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. <i>fiOw</i> is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
Geon	175	71%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
 Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%

game	issue	score
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
Lara is back to her best in <i>The Guardian Of Light</i> . Tomb Raider fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too.		
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.		
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	195	94%
The HD remake of arguably the best game in the <i>Monkey Island</i> series is a more than welcome addition to the PSN.		
Moon Diver	205	46%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.		
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the <i>PixelJunk</i> series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its <i>PixelJunk</i> series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
Imagine the first <i>PixelJunk Shooter</i> , but better, but actually a bit worse because it's not as fresh. There you go.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%

game	issue	score
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.		
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	193	78%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic 4: Episode One	199	82%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Swarm	204	78%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the <i>Monkey Island</i> franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up.		
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets <i>Pac-Man</i> meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%

game	issue	score
Worms	179	91%
There's a reason <i>Worms</i> is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

A Space Shooter For Two Bucks	202	55%
Alien Havoc	186	68%
Angry Birds	202	93%
Flinging birds at stuff for four times the price of the original in a less-functional fashion than before has never been so much fun.		
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Edge	202	85%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero Of Sparta	186	57%
I Must Run!	202	70%
Kahoots	186	88%
NOVA: Near Orbit Vanguard Alliance	202	63%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
<i>Pinball Fantasies</i> was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Sky Force	202	68%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vampire	186	67%
Who's That Flying?!	202	64%

PSP LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, <i>Legends</i> is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%

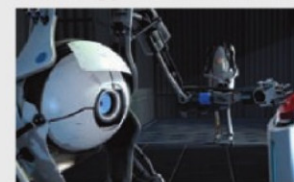
*denotes import review

PAUSE TO CONSIDER...

Portal 2's co-op

IN OUR REVIEW of *Portal 2* last issue we didn't give nearly enough space to talking about co-op play – blame Dransfield, he's an idiot. Let's remedy that right now by adding our unadulterated praise to this, one of the finest co-operative modes we've ever seen in a videogame. Yes, that's not hyperbole – it really is that stupidly good an addition.

While in so many other games co-op simply feels like a case of two or more of you playing through the same game together, *Portal 2* manages to do things in a surprisingly different fashion.



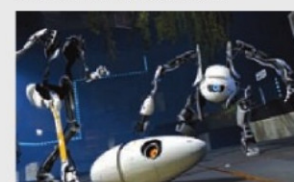
There's the obvious point that the levels and story are different – though admittedly the story isn't anything to pay too much attention to in multiplayer.

But then there's the simple addition of two extra portals, as provided by the second player. The possibilities this opens up aren't exactly what you might call 'endless', but



they are wider-ranging than when playing with a measly two portals. Oh, and the potential to launch your team-mate out of a perpetual fall across a huge jump is always hilarious.

We're running out of space again and we're realising there's more we want to go on about. *Portal 2*'s co-op just cements the game's position as one of the best of the year and one of the best ever



released, on anything. Not only has single-player made all other games seem bad, multiplayer has made all other co-op seem pointless. And it's still funny.



GARY MCTRUTH'S WORLD OF RECOMMENDATIONS

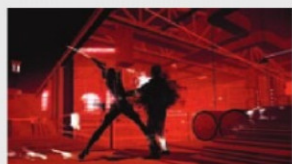
THIS MONTH: WET

I'M OFTEN ASKED while on my Recommendation Tours – tickets are available from all good ticket-selling stands (that are just homeless people) – how I decide on what it is I should tell all you good folk to go out there and buy.



It's simple: I ask myself 'is it well graphics?' If it meets this strict criteria, it is fit for selection. Next I ask myself this second question: 'has it well like got weapons and stuff innit?' It is a good question to ask.

And you know what game answers these questions with



a massive, powerful 'yes' right in the face? A little ditty called *Wet*. It's one of the most well graphics things I've ever seen, and it's got weapons coming out the wazoo.

Obviously the numpties at *Play* decided to give it... hang on a minute... 41%?! Wow, they're even more dumber than I

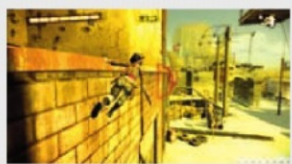


did think they is. You know I wouldn't be going around telling you to buy it if it wasn't well good, like, would I?

It goes red sometimes, and you can slide on your knees, plus it's a well sexy lady – basically it's one of the best



games ever made and I have no hesitation whatsoever in heartily recommending it to you all.



game	issue	score
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
Bar some combat control issues, <i>GTA: Chinatown Wars</i> has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
Successfully taking the <i>GTA</i> formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.		
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!		
What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		

game	issue	score
LocoRoco	143	94%
We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
A proper <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.		
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%

game	issue	score
Sega Rally	158	90%
Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.		
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Spinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
In the absence of a 'real' MGS game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job.		
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
<i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

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WHAT WE SAW BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

The invite-only reveals on the biggest PlayStation 3 games

Asking Questions, Getting Answers: The Ultimate Guide

Interviews are a big part of videogame journalism, but there's little in the way of guides on how to do them. We at Play aim to redress that balance with our own fantastic tutorial on how to interview game developers, starting... now

- 1** The first question is always the most important; it sets the tone for the 10-45 minutes to come and can make or break your whole interview. We find the ideal opener is:

[Enter room. Drop trousers] "Give me money."

- 2** Much as it pains us to admit, there are always 'stock' questions we will often – if not always – ask. They can be useful, though, especially if an interview is going badly. Take these prime examples, suitable for absolutely any game:

"How many graphics does it got?"

"How do you think you'll be able to take on *Call Of Duty*?"

"When was the first time you ate a Skittle?"

- 3** If you feel the interview is getting away from you – an unresponsive interviewee, or a series of bad questions putting them on the defensive, for example – these questions are guaranteed to lighten the mood and get everyone back onside:

"If you love polygons so much why don't you just go and marry them?"

"You should come up with a good acronym for your game, like PIES* or BEAN** or MUSHED***."

"Where did you get that smashing blouse?"

- 4** There are times – we've all experienced them – when an interview has gone better than expected. Answers have been interesting and open and you have managed to get more information than you ever expected. Take advantage of the situation with questions like these:

"Do we kiss now?"

"Why isn't your game as good as *Call Of Duty*?"

"How many guns is in it? And am they accurate to real lifes?"

- 5** At some point your interview will come to a close. You will be warned you have a few minutes left, or that this will be the final question you can ask. You should always aim to close on something quotable – something *interesting*. Here's the one way to guarantee an epic closing answer:

"Have you ever killed a man just to see him die?"

*Personality Induced Exposition Shooter ("mouth")

**Basic Explanation According to Need ("tutorial")

***Massively Unresponsive Squirrel Has Explosive Diarrhoea ("self-explanatory")

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